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APOLOGETICAL STUDIES

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The Trinity, Jesus Christ, The Church, Penance

by

the Very Rev. J. TIXERONT, SS. DD.

Authorized English Translation

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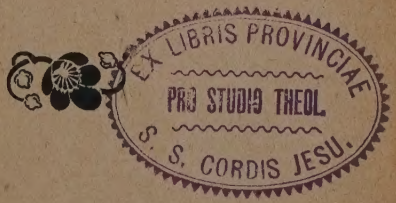

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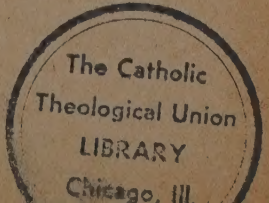

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TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

This book due to the pen of the Very Reverend Doctor Joseph Tixeront, professor of Ancient Christian Literature at the Catholic University of Lyons and author of the "History of Dogmas", is made up of two parts: the first comprises three conferences on the subject of the Trinity, Christ's divinity and the Church; the second, researches in the form of an historical essay on the sacrament of Penance. Though these two parts naturally differ somewhat in style, yet they have a common purpose, viz., to justify, in the light of history, some of our most important beliefs and show that they come to us from our blessed Lord Himself.

This purpose and the scholarly and luminous manner in which the author has carried it out, will suffice, no doubt, to make this little book acceptable to our studious seminarians, priests and laity.

PART I

APOLOGETICAL CONFERENCES

THE ORIGIN OF THE BELIEF IN THE TRINITY

The belief in the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—is unquestionably one of the fundamental beliefs of our faith. An express profession of that mystery is required of the candidate to baptism or of his sponsor; it is in the name of the Trinity that the water of regeneration, flowing upon his head, admits him into the Church and makes him a child of God; the Church herself begins and concludes all her sacred ceremonies with the invocation of the three divine persons, and, when, in a catechism class a Christian child is asked whether there is not a profession of faith still shorter than the Apostles' Creed, he answers : " Yes, and that is the sign of the cross, which we trace

upon ourselves, saying: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost. Amen."

No wonder, then, that Protestants have both so long treated that belief with respect and at last launched their attacks upon it. They have long treated that belief with respect, for, in their eyes, that belief seemed, as it were, the essence of Christianity, and their constant claim has been to bring Christianity back to its original simplicity. They have at last launched their attacks upon it, because, as they have emptied Christianity more and more of all positive dogma, and transformed it into a mere vague and indefinite feeling, they must of necessity get rid of a mystery, i. e., of an unfathomable reality, which the creeds have proclaimed unhesitatingly. But, to get rid of a dogma, it does not suffice to deny it. Those, like Liberal critics, for instance, who while denying dogmas still claim for Christ an exceptional authority and religious significance, must explain why and how this or that dogma, which they reject, has grown outside of His teaching; why and how these dogmas are really a departure from His thoughts and therefore cannot come from Him. And therefore, as with the other dogmas, so also with the Trinitarian dogma, Liberal critics must seek out and propose, aside from revelation, an explanation of its origin and development; they must strive to find, outside of Christ's teaching, the source

of the rather strange belief in one God and three divine persons.

One of these naturalistic explanations has been advanced, at a comparatively recent date, by the pseudo-Antoine Dupin, in a series of three articles that appeared in the *Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuses* for the year 1906. Who Antoine Dupin is, we have not here to investigate; he proclaims himself a Catholic; but surely he is not; he is but a Protestant, and even perhaps a downright rationalist and freethinker. However, we are here concerned only with his articles. —The reason why I single them out, is not that they present new views on the subject —their whole substance is borrowd from the works of Harnack, Holtzmann and Loisy; but because they give a fairly good summary of the theories advanced by Liberal Protestantism and by extreme Modernism, to explain in a natural way the origin of the Trinitarian dogma. The summary of these theories, which takes up only their most salient features, is presented rather bluntly and uninterestingly; but, precisely because of its compactness, the exposition of those views is more intelligible.

These views are as follows.

According to Antoine Dupin, the dogma of the Trinity originated and grew substantially in the following manner. No doubt, after

the death of Jesus, the early Christians believed in one God, father of the chosen people, in Jesus Christ and in a Holy Spirit. But, at the beginning, they looked upon these three terms as three distinct realities, isolated one from the other. " No bond was at hand ", the author writes, " whereby they could be brought together; they were mentioned apart from one another... Between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, there was not, as yet, that intimate union which makes them call for one another and proceed together, and without which there is no triad ". Moreover, the words Father, Son and Holy Ghost, did not mean at all then what they mean now to us. God's paternity as regards the chosen people and Jesus Christ, was exclusively of a moral character; Jesus Christ was looked upon as a mere man, whose mission and virtues had made Him God's son in a very special way; the Holy Ghost was identical with a divine impersonal activity working upon the newly baptized, in order to impart to them the charisms and particularly the gift of tongues. Of the three terms of the triad, the first alone was God, the second was a creature, and the third was not even a concrete and personal being : it was but God considered in His external works; besides, we must observe that these three terms were in no way connected together and in no formula did they call one for the other.

At last, *the* formula was created in about the year 80, when it appears in St. Matthew's Gospel (XXVIII, 19), and it made its way very rapidly into the liturgy, since it is pointed out as a baptismal formula and as a formula used in the eucharistic service, both by the *Didachè* and St. Justin, which belong respectively to the end of the first, and the middle of the second century. As early as the end of the first century, baptism was given in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. But a period of more than three hundred years was necessary for the transformation of the concepts of the Son and the Holy Ghost into the concepts of two divine hypostases, equal to the Father. St. Paul had already represented the historical Christ as a spiritual and heavenly man, who existed long before he appeared upon earth. Some Christians, who had read Philo's works, identified Him with the *Logos* spoken of by that philosopher; in other words, they made Him a superhuman being, intermediate between God and the world. Finally, others - Greeks who had embraced Christianity—took the word *Son of God* literally, and saw in Jesus a God of the same nature as the Father. St. Paul's concept was shortlived; but the two concepts of Jesus-Logos and of Jesus-Son of God lasted much longer. The former remained predominant in the East, the latter in the West. At bottom, they contradicted each

other, and after a few skirmishes during the 3d century, they clashed, during the 4th century, in a violent struggle that lasted almost a hundred years : this was the Arian conflict. The Western concept got the upper hand; the Son was declared consubstantial to the Father.

Furthermore, it was no easy task, if we may so speak, for the Holy Ghost to win His recognition first as a person, and next as God. St. Paul had identified Him with the substance of the heavenly Christ : " The Lord is a spirit " (*II Cor.*, III, 17). The 4th Gospel, on the contrary, represented Him as a hypostasis emanating from the Son and distinct from Him. But the influence of the 4th Gospel was not felt, in this regard, for many years. The Philonian theory of the Logos, which the Apologists had adopted, made no room for the Holy Ghost. Hence St. Justin, Athenagoras, Tatian, Theophilus of Antioch, St. Irenaeus himself and St. Hippolytus, although associating Him with the Father and the Son, see in Him God's impersonal grace instead of a well defined personality. The Alexandrians—Clement and Origen—and Tertullian are responsible for presenting definitively the Holy Spirit as a person. Tertullian was first to proclaim Him God; and even then, for more than a century, this assertion found no formal echo. It was taken up by St. Athanasius and sanctioned by the second general Council, held in the year 381. At that time, the Trinity,

as believed by us, was constituted, and the Trinitarian dogma definitively settled : the faithful thus came to believe in one only God, subsisting in three persons, who are consubstantial and equal, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

This is—so we are told—the way in which the dogma of the Trinity grew and came to be received in the Church. My purpose is not to discuss this system, directly and in detail. That discussion, besides encroaching on a field of inquiry reserved to others, might easily prove tedious and perhaps too difficult to follow, to those who are not thoroughly acquainted with the literary history of early Christian antiquity. Instead of such a minute examination of our opponents' assertions, I prefer to establish the truth directly, by answering these two questions :

Is the belief in the Trinity a primitive belief, which was held by the early Christians and the object of which was revealed by Jesus Christ?

Is the dogma of Christ's divinity of Greek origin ?

As to the question of the Holy Ghost, I shall not treat it separately, inasmuch as the difficulties raised in this connection are rather unimportant.

I

We may take up immediately the first question : Is the belief in the Trinity a primitive

belief, which was held by the early Christians, and the object of which was revealed by Jesus Christ?

In stating the question in these terms, we leave aside, for the time being, the special study of what refers both to the full and absolute divinity of the Son or of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost. The question that is now before us, is simply whether or not the early Christians believed in a Father, a Son and a Holy Spirit, as three terms joined together and making up exclusively the divine world; and whether or not, they received that teaching from Christ Himself.

Liberal critics grant that about the year 80 this belief was certainly accepted. In his epistle, which dates back to the years 93-97, St. Clement of Rome exclaims (Chapt. LVIII, 2): "*As God liveth, and the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost liveth, the faith and hope of the elect!*" The *Didachè* or *Teaching of the Apostles*—that may be still more ancient—recalls that baptism must be conferred in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost (VII, 1, 3), and, as has been said, the same formula is found in St. Matthew's Gospel, (XXVIII, 19), which cannot be assigned to a later date. It is true that several difficulties have been raised in connection with this verse of St. Matthew: we shall deal with them subsequently. Meanwhile, we may lay it

down as a fact that, some twenty years before the end of the first century, the formula that joins together in a consecutive enumeration the three terms of the Trinity, was already in existence. Those three terms did not live apart from one another in the consciousness of the faithful : they formed a well defined group whose units called for one another.

Whether this was also the case in the preceding years, we have now to examine. Previously to the Gospel literature—in this I fully agree with our opponents—we find St. Paul's Epistles that follow one another according to Harnack from the year 48, the date of the Epistles to the Thessalonians, to the year 64, the date of the pastoral Epistles. Now, far from giving *ex professo* to his correspondents a Trinitarian teaching, St. Paul constantly *implies* it. We know what his theology was : the theology of redemption and grace. Man is fallen ; all mankind lies under the yoke of sin and under a divine curse. God has mercy on us ; in order to save us, He sends His Son, His only begotten Son, His beloved Son, who was with Him before all ages in the " form " of God. The Son dies and pays our debt : as Adam had been for us a principle of death, Jesus becomes for us a principle of life. Through our birth from Adam, we were earthly and material men (χοϊκοι) ; by being born again through Christ, we become

spiritual (πνευματικοί), precisely because the Savior communicates to us His Spirit. That Spirit is in us like a new soul which gives us the spiritual and supernatural life, just as our soul imparts to our body its natural life; He makes Christ live in us. This is really the central point of St. Paul's teaching: and we need not insist to show that teaching was simply unintelligible for the faithful and is inexplicable for us, without the belief in a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost, existing together in a relation of close mutual dependence: the Father, sending the Son and saving, through Him; the Holy Ghost being communicated by the Father and the Son, and bringing to the very depth of our souls the divine life that He holds from them.

However, one word more on the subject: since we are asked to bring forward some texts in which these three terms are joined together and call for one another, as it were, I shall produce some of these texts.

The *Epistle to the Hebrews,* even supposing for the sake of argument—that St. Paul were not its immediate author, contains unquestionably his doctrine. According to Prof. Jacquier, it dates back to the years 63-66. In Chapter IX, ℣. 13, the writer who wants to set off, by way of comparison the value of Jesus' sacrifice, exclaims: "*If the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled,*

to the cleansing of the flesh : how much more shall the blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? " We find here God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit united together in one and the same sentence : God the Father, to whom the sacrifice is offered, Christ who offers it, and the Holy Ghost who is in Tatian's forcible language, the " deacon " of that suffering God.

The *Epistle to Titus* is certainly from St. Paul and may have been written about the year 65. In Chapter III, ℣. 4, St. Paul recalls God's many kind deeds towards the faithful and particularly the grace of baptism, and again he mentions *uno tenore* the three divine Persons : " *When the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared, not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost, whom he hath poured forth upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour : that, being justified by his grace, we may be heirs, according to hope, of life everlasting.* "

The *Epistle to the Ephesians* must be assigned to the time of the Apostle's captivity in Rome, i. e., to about the year 60. This is the prayer he makes therein for the addressees of his letter (III, 14-17) : " *For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom all*

paternity in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened by his Spirit with might unto the inward man, that Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts : that you may be rooted and founded in charity. A few lines below, recalling the special attributions of each term of the Trinity : "*There is but one body* (he is speaking of the body of the Church) *and one Spirit, as you have been called by your calling to one hope. There is but one Lord* (*Christ*), *one baptism, one God, father of all, who is above all, and works through all, and is in all*" (IV, 4-6).

Furthermore, during one of the winters of the years 55-59, St. Paul writes his masterly epistle to the Romans. In Chapter VIII, verses 9-11, he reminds them that they have received the Holy Ghost and that, therefore, they must no longer live according to the flesh : "*As to you, you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body indeed is dead because of sin, but the spirit liveth because of justification. And if the Spirit of him, that raised up* JESUS *from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up* JESUS CHRIST *from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies, because of his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*" Again, a few verses below (15-17) : "*You have not received a spirit of bondage again in fear : but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry : Abba, (Father).*

For the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ: yet so if we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him."

This idea is also found nearly word for word in the Epistle to the Galatians (IV, 4-6), which was written between the years 53-58. There also we meet with the mention of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. We find it, too, in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians (II, 13, 14), written between the years 50-52, in the first Epistle to the same (I, 3-5 and V, 18 19), written shortly before. The two following texts are so plain as to deserve a special notice. In the XIIth Chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, written between the years 55-58, St. Paul insists on the order to be kept in liturgical gatherings, and the perfect agreement of hearts that must exist, notwithstanding the diversity of charisms that are manifested therein, and then he writes (4-6): "*Now there is diversity of gifts, but it is the same Spirit* (who bestows them); *diversity of ministries, but the same Lord* (Jesus Christ); *diversity of operations, but the same God* (the Father) *who worketh in all.*" Lastly, at the end of his second Epistle to the Corinthians (XIII, 13), written some six or eight months after the first, he sends to his correspondents that supreme salutation that one might almost take for the formula of

the papal blessing : " *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God* (the Father) *and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all.* "

It cannot be doubted, then, that, according to St. Paul, the three terms of the Trinity did not live isolated from one another, and that, at times, nay often, they called for one another. True, the Apostle does not always name them in the regular order, and as he is not writing upon that subject in particular, he mentions first sometimes the Father, and other times either the Son or the Holy Ghost, according to the demands of the discussion. But it would be unscientific, it seems to me, to conclude from this that St. Paul was unacquainted with the Trinity and dit not know how to make... the sign of the cross.

II

The study of St. Paul's writings bring us back to the year 50. Between that date and that of Christ's death, some twenty years elapsed which saw the growth of the nascent Church. Can we find out what was then the thought of the Church on the subject which we are now considering? We can, owing to the discourses pronounced during that period and recorded by St. Luke in the *Acts of the Apostles*—discourses, all, or at least most of which come from St. Peter.

The authenticity of these discourses is beyond doubt, and our opponents readily look upon them as the oldest documents wherein the Christian conscience first expressed itself, and quote them accordingly. What do we find in those discourses?

Ten days after the Savior's ascension, the Apostles go out from the Cenacle, where they have received the Holy Ghost. On hearing them speak in unknown foreign tongues, the people think that they are drunk. Peter, raising his voice, recalls Joel's prophecy announcing that God shall pour His Spirit upon every flesh; then, coming to Christ's resurrection, he goes on to say : " *This Jesus hath God raised again, whereof all we are witnesses. And now that He has been raised up into heaven by the right hand of God, and has received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath poured forth this Spirit which you see and hear.* " At these words, the Jews wonder, and many repent. They ask Peter what they must do to be saved, and the Apostle replies : " *Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ ; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are far off, whomsoever the Lord our God shall call.* " (II, 32-39.)

Meanwhile, the Apostles are arrested by order of the Sanhedrim and brought before that tribu-

nal. They proclaim once more through the lips of Peter, Christ's resurrection and exaltation and add : " *Ad we are witnesses of these things, with the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to all that obey Him.* " (V, 32.) Sometime later, Peter is called to Caesarea by the centurion, Cornelius, who is anxious to hear him; Peter, alluding to Christ's baptism, brings together in one sentence God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit : "*You know... how God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power Jesus of Nazareth.* " (X, 37, 38.) We meet with the same expression both in Chapter XI, 15-17, where St. Peter gives to the brethren of Jerusalem an account of his dealings with Cornelius, and in his address to the Jerusalem conference (XV, 8-11).

This fact, then, seems to be unquestionable : the three terms of the divine Trinity were so bracketed together in the minds of the Apostles that these could hardly help associating them together also in their discourses. This finds its explanation in the fact that, particularly in the *Acts,* both Christ's resurrection and the baptism of neophytes are mentioned again. Now it was impossible to name Christ and recall His resurrection without naming the Father, who had sent Him and raised Him up from the grave, and likewise, it was impossible to speak of the Christian baptism without mentioning the Holy Spirit, who was given in that baptism and

manifested Himself externally in the neophytes. To be sure, in these discourses we see the name God, ascribed only to the Father, whereas, instead of the Son, Christ is referred to; but, besides the fact that these expressions contradict in no way the Trinitarian dogma, it was quite natural that the Apostles should not speak otherwise than they did, nor begin their preaching with direct assertions regarding the Divine Trinity. What they had to show conclusively to the Jews and the Gentiles was, first of all, Christ's Messianic character and divine mission, a mission that was confirmed by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. As to explaining what Christ is properly and in Himself, and what the Holy Ghost is, this was reserved to a far deeper theology which was beyond the mental reach of those early converts and would have been, to say the least, inopportune. One thing, at least, was clear for all : viz., God, Christ and the Holy Ghost, make up a group that cannot be separated, Christ being the Son of God, the Son of the Father, and the Holy Ghost being, at the same time, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ, and being sent by both, these three terms and they only constituting the whole divine essence by whom and to whom the neophyte was consecrated through baptism.

III

This, then, was what the Apostles taught from the very beginning. Now, since even then that teaching is so well settled and definite, the question naturally arises if this fact can be accounted for, unless we admit that they, too, received on the subject a teaching of the same kind, a settled and definite teaching. For it is true that, before Christ, the concept of some sort of a multiplicity in God is vaguely outlined in the Old Testament The book of *Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus,* and the *Wisdom* of Solomon, had made use of a bold figure of speech and personified God's wisdom; a distinct life had been seemingly ascribed to His Name, Glory and Spirit. Then, too, there was still more deeply in the minds of the Jews the idea of a Messias; and in one or two passages, this Messias is looked upon as the Son of God. But in all these temptative expressions, in these lispings, as it were, there was nothing settled or precise. Jewish orthodoxy would have had but very little sympathy for a doctrine that would seemingly have jeopardized monotheism. That the Apostles should have limited, as they actually did, to three, neither more nor less, the divine terms, and that they should have set off the person of the Holy Ghost

as they actually did, cannot be accounted for, then, unless they received on these subjects another teaching besides that of the Synagogue. What is that other teaching?

Of course, that of Jesus, the teaching of Jesus both in St. John and the Synoptics. I say purpose by *in St. John;* for, to my mind, the strongest proof of the authenticity of Christ's teaching on the subject of the Holy Ghost in Chapters XIV, XV, XVI of St. John, is what is said of the Holy Ghost in the *Acts*. The person and action of the Holy Ghost hold so prominent a place in the discourses of the Apostles that the *Acts* has been called the Gospel of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles, then, had received concerning Him fairly complete instructions, and these instructions we find especially in St. John: *"The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost whom my Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you"* (XIV, 26). *"When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of me"* (XV, 26). *"When the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak, and the things that are to come He shall show you. He shall glorify me; because He shall receive of mine, and shall show it to you. All things whatsoever the*

Father hath, are mine. Therefore I said, He shall receive of mine and show it to you" (XVI, 13-15).

These are the words of Christ, as recorded by St. John, and we may readily notice that therein the Savior unfolds the close connection there is between Himself and His Father on one hand, and the Holy Ghost, Himself and His Father, on the other. But we may consult the Synoptics also, the more so as Liberal Critics accept more readily their testimony. Two words of Christ that are recorded therein are of the utmost importance : that in which He tells the Apostles that He will send them the Holy Spirit; and that whereby He commands them to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

The former is given by St. Luke (XXIV, 49) : *"I shall send you the gift promised by my Father, and stay, you, in the city, till you be endued inter power from on high."* That gift, that strength is simply the Holy Ghost; for, as a matter of fact, when coming back to those words of Jesus in the *Acts*, St. Luke records them again and more fully : *"Eating together with them, He commanded them, that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (saith He) by my mouth; for John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. They therefore who were come together, asked Him, saying : Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again*

the kingdom of Israel? But He said to them: It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in His own power; but you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth."

Like the teaching of the Apostles, that of Christ bracketed together the three terms of the Trinity. But what is especially noticeable, is the relation that Jesus establishes between the descent of the Holy Spirit and baptism. That effusion of the Holy Spirit is a sort of baptism, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, as the baptism of Jesus had been already characterized by St. John the Baptist: *In Spiritu sancto et igne.* In a short while we shall make use of that remark.

We now come to the most solemn and explicit revelation of the Trinity, contained in the Gospels. Christ is about to return to heaven; He sends His Apostles to the spiritual conquest of the world, and coming close He says to them: "*All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world*" (*Matt.*, XXVIII, 18-20). These words

are peremptory, and, if their authenticity is accepted, we can bring our demonstration to an end. But I need not say that all the efforts of our opponents tend precisely to lessen as much as possible their authority. It has been doubted, first, whether they had been really recorded by the author of the first Gospel. Whilst searching into Eusebius' writings, an English professor, Conybeare, has found twenty-five passages that give the first part of verse 19 : *Going therefore, teach ye all nations,* without giving the second : *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;* or even that quote the verse in this way : " *Going therefore, teach ye all nations in my name.* " Two other passages—one from St. Justin, the other, from Hermas, seemed to Conybeare to exhibit the same feature; and he concluded therefrom that our present reading of St. Matthew was not the primitive text, and that there existed an older reading which did not contain the baptismal formula and to which Hermas, St. Justin, and Eusebius give witness [1]. But, unfortunately, this display of otherwise genuine erudition has proved, *in casu,* ineffective. The proof from St. Justin and Hermas has been first set aside; for their texts have but a remote connection with that of St. Matthew. Then,

[1] Conybeare, *The Eusebian Form of the text Matth.*, xxviii, 19, in *Zeitschrift für neutestam. Wissenschaft*, 1901, p. 275-288.

scholars have placed under Conybeare's eyes three passages where Eusebius quotes the text of the First Gospel just as we have it now, and have explained why, in the other quotations, he omitted the second part of the verse that did not refer to his subject. Lastly, and above all, it has been pointed out that all the writers previous to Eusebius who quote the text we are considering,—and there are twenty-one of them, succeeding one another from the first down to the third century,—quote it just as we read it now, and that none of the Gospel MSS gives another reading[1]. In these conditions, Conybeare's position was altogether untenable. His view has been given up; but, instead, it has been advanced that the words ascribed here by the Evangelist to Christ were never uttered by Him, but that they had been devised and placed there in order to justify the practice of baptizing in the name of the three divine Persons, a practice that began to spread at the time St. Matthew wrote his Gospel.

The Evangelist is then charged with forgery and untruthfulness; how are these charges bolstered up? The first proof is taken from the remarkable neatness and precision of the declaration written down by St. Matthew. That declaration is a typical stereotyped sacramental

[1] Cf. E. Riggenbach, *Der trinitarische Taufbefehl*, Gütersloh, 1903.

formula : " *Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in he name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" Now Christ was not wont to speak with so much rigor and conciseness. His words were anything but didactic, and His trinitarian teaching, especially in the Synoptics, lacks firmness and precision. How could it have suddenly assumed the nicely shaded precision that it has in St. Matthew?—Simply because, after His resurrection, the conditions of Christ's teaching were no longer the same. The *Euntes docete* is a word of the risen Christ, about to ascend into Heaven. At that moment, the Savior needed not observe those cautions and that *chiar-obscuro* He had observed during His mortal life. And, them, we are not bound to admit that St. Matthew records here literally the words of Christ, and that the lapidary style in which he expresses them is not of his own making. We believe, indeed, that the Evangelists reproduced substantially the Savior's discourses; but no one in the Church has ever maintained that they reproduced them absolutely word for word : besides that such a view cannot stand against the fact that the same discourse of Christ is given by the four Evangelists in different terms. If, then, some one looks upon so didactic a formula as unlikely on the lips of Christ, even after His resurrection, he is free to see therein a forcible summary of His instructions—a summary made

by the Evangelist himself, and the truthfulness of which is placed beyond any doubt by what we know from other sources. As we have seen, Christ told his Apostles explicitly that the Holy Ghost was to come down upon them, and that descent of the Holy Spirit He called a baptism, and in one of his discourses (*Acts,* XI, 16), St. Peter has preserved the remembrance of these words of Christ to the Apostles : " *John indeed baptized you in water; but you shall be baptized in the Holy Ghost.* " Christ has, then, established His baptism in close connection with the Holy Ghost; His baptism imparted the Holy Ghost, that Holy Spirit which had been promised by God the Father, and which He, Himself, Jesus, was to communicate. Nor should we forget either that Christ's baptism at the hands of St. John the Baptist, a prototype of the Christian baptism, was the occasion when the Trinity was revealed in a solemn action : then it was that " Christ coming out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the shape of a dove, and the Father's voice was heard : " *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am whell pleased.* " " From the beginning, then, the doctrine of the Trinity is closely connected by Jesus Himself, with the baptismal rite; and therefore the command given to the Apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, is most likely and natural. Even granting that

command was not given by Christ in the same words that it has now, it remains true that it comes from Christ himself and expresses His mind accurately.

But here we are confronted with another difficulty. It seems that during the thirty or forty years that followed the Savior's death, and perhaps even longer, in some sects or some parts of the Church, baptism was, in fact, conferred, not in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, but merely in the name of Jesus. In four different places (II, 38; VIII, 16; X, 48; XIX, 5), where it speaks of baptism, the *Acts of the Apostles* relates that baptism was, or must be given in the name of the Lord Jesus. The formula varies indeed somewhat: εἰς τὸ ὄνομα, ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι, ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ: but it remains substantially the same. St. Paul speaks of baptism in Christ, εἰς Χριστόν, εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν (*Gal.* III, 27; *Rom.*, VI, 3); the apocryphal acts of Paul and Thecla written about the year 170 mentions likewise twice (34; cf. 25) a baptism given in the name of Christ Jesus; besides, other similar indications might be given. Supposing then, that as St. Matthew relates, Christ gave an express command to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, how can we explain that fact? Are we going to believe either that that command was unknown to the primitive Church, or that, if she was ac-

quainted with it, she did not comply with it?

This difficulty is more serious than the preceding, but it is not beyond solution. The alleged texts are certainly such as quoted, but we may ask ourselves whether the expression, *baptism in the name of Jesus,* signifies a baptism of which the formula mentions only Jesus, or signifies, rather, a baptism instituted by Jesus Christ, a baptism in which Christ's name and memory hold a central position and give to the rite all its bearing and efficacy. In the latter hypothesis, baptism in the name of Jesus means simply Christian baptism, and it is but a way of expressing in a few words the economy of that baptism. That interpretation is quite plausible, and, as a matter of fact, has been accepted by many, even among non Catholic scholars.—But even supposing that, at the beginning, baptism was here and there conferred in the name of Jesus only, this would be no argument against the authenticity of the trinitarian formula of baptism. It may be that not as much stress as now was placed on the words of Jesus, and that they were not deemed to contain an absolute and peremptory command, and especially it may be that some Christians did not think that He meant to impose for baptism a formula *ne varietur.* Christ tells His Apostles to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. What does this mean : *in the*

name, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα? Does it mean : in naming the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost? Or : baptizing the nations through the power and energy of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, that is imparted to you? Or again : as legates and representatives of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who cleanse people through your ministry? Or lastly : consecrating men, through baptism, to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost? All these various meanings are not at all improbable, and, besides, do not exclude one another. The Church's custom and practical interpretation have laid stress on the first of those meanings; but it may not have been perceived from the very beginning, and Christians may have thought that the Savior's intention could be complied with, even though that meaning were not literally followed. By being baptized in the name of Jesus, the early Christians became other Christs and, therefore, children of the Father, and received the Holy Spirit. They thus entered into close relations with the Trinity : relations which were externally signified more explicitly indeed by the trinitarian formula, but which the baptismal rite, when duly performed, sufficed to establish.

From the baptism granted in the name of Jesus it cannot be argued, then, that the trinitarian formula which St. Matthew places on the lips of the Savior, is not genuine. But we may go still

further, and, assuming no longer the defensive, but the offensive, we may ask our opponents, how it came to pass that, supposing that formula is not from Christ, it succeeded in imposing itself as coming from Him, and in imposing itself in practice so as to take the place of the more simple formula "*in the name of Jesus*" in the collation of baptism. Pseudo-Dupin answers first, that that change in the rite was but slight—which is true of the substance of the rite, but not of its formula which with we are now concerned; and, then, that it is subsequently to the external manifestations of the Holy Ghost in baptism, that the thought came of placing His name and, by way of consequence that of the Father too, in the baptismal formula. However we may recall that, according to Dupin, that innovation did not take place before the year 70 or so, and that the external manifestations of the Holy Ghost—the *charisms,* as they are called—became more and more scarce in proportion as early Christianity became more and more a thing of the past. The *Didache* mentions them very seldom indeed and with some distrust; St. Clement does not mention them at all. About the year 70, they were certainly rather uncommon, and so, it would be at the very time when the external working of the Holy Ghost was on the wane, that it gave rise to a change in the formula of baptism. This is rather unlikely and

the suggested explanation of so important a change is evidently altogether inadequate.

I may, then, conclude that, far from dating from the end of the first century and being the product of mistaken Christian imagination, as we are told, the belief in the Trinity goes back to the early days of Christianity, and springs from the teaching of Christ Himself, and this is precisely the point which I intended to establish. Now I feel the need to beg my readers' pardon for the dryness of that demonstration and thank them for their attention in following it up in all its details. By their very nature, these discussions are lifeless, and, were I to present them in a flowery style, they would lose more in clearness than gain in attractiveness. Hence I have chosen to be plain : I trust that through that somewhat stiff and unadorned argumentation, I have brought some fresh light to your minds and strengthened your convictions on what is the first and fundamental article of our faith.

IS THE DOGMA OF CHRIST'S DIVINITY OF GREEK ORIGIN?

Is the dogma of Christ's divinity of Greek origin? This is the question I lay down before my readers. Some of them may wonder at its wording and ask that its precise meaning should be explained. This explanation I am going to give presently.

According to our opponents—Liberal Protestants and some Modernists—the first generation of Christians looked upon Jesus as a mere man, chosen by God and consecrated by Him Messias, in His baptism. That man had preached God's kingdom, wrought miracles, and then had died andarisen in some way or other, and had been raised to Heaven, whence He was soon to come to judge the world. But however glorious He may have been then, Jesus was but a mere man, one like us. This was, in truth—so Dupin claims—what the Apostles preached to their early converts; nay, they would have preached nothing else; for, because of their Jewish frame of mind, they would never have thought of Jesus as a God:

this would have jeopardized the strict monotheism of the law and seemed to all a blasphemy against Yahweh.

But, among those pagans of Græco-Roman origin who were soon—about the middle of the first century—within the reach of the Christian preaching, such a monotheistic scruple could not, and did not exist, at least in the same degree. These were wont to hear several gods referred to, and, therefore, could hardly be shocked at the thought of admitting by the side of the Supreme God another God that would be subaltern and secondary, as it were. On the other hand, as Christ and His external humanity were removed from sight, there remained but the deep impression produced by that wonderful personality, and the thought of His altogether unique function of Messias and Judge of the living and the dead. For the host of people who fed on His memory, such a personage could not be nor remain a mere man; He must, of necessity, be placed far above and outside of mankind. This actually took place.

The change took place in two ways, or rather was brought about under two different influences.

Ever since the Stoics and Plato's successors, Greek philosophy had asserted the existence of a semi-real and semi-ideal being, who was called the *Logos,* the Mind or the Word. Prop-

erly speaking, the Logos was neither God nor a creature, but an intermediary between the two, inferior to the former, superior to the latter, destined to bring both God and creatures together, and make their relations possible. That concept of the Logos had been developed mainly by the Jewish philosopher Philo, who died about the year 50 A. D. If we read through his somewhat confused description of the Logos, we notice that he calls Him God's shadow and likeness, God's first begotten son, another God. The neophytes from heathenism, for whom the purely Jewish idea of the Messias was almost imconprehensible, saw in Jesus rather this Logos but as modified by their own philosophers, the Logos, Son of God, or an inferior God, who had taken a body and appeared in a human guise. This is the first manner in which the belief in Christ's divinity made its way into the Church, and it is evident that Greek philosophy had the main share therein. We find it written down in the Fourth Gospel which begins with the assertion of the Logos existing before the creation and becoming man for our sakes in the course of time.

But the Logos was known only to the learned. The populace reached by a shorter road the same dogma of Christ's divinity. As has been remarked, Jesus could not be preached to the pagans as the Messias. The concept of Messias was an exclusively Jewish concept, bound up with the

Jewish national life and meaningless for whoever was not a son of Israel. But the name of Messias had an equivalent, that of *Son of God*. The Messias was the Son of God, His Son, no doubt in a moral sense and through mere adoption. This was an expression which pagans could understand: unfortunately, they misunderstood it, or rather, in their eagerness to place Christ's person as high as possible, they overestimated its significance. Mythology supplied a great many instances of gods who were really born of other gods. They came to think that this was also the case with Christ, and that He was God's Son, not only in the moral, but also in the physical and natural sense of the word. Being the Son of God, He must also be God, of the same nature as His Father. Thus the dogma of Christ's divinity was born also of the prejudices and frame of mind that Greek religion and mythology had produced in the converts from heathenism. Whichever we may choose of the two forms in which that dogma comes before us in the history of the early Church—either Jesus God, because Logos, or Jesus God, because Son of God—we find at their origin Greek philosophy and conceptions. Hence the dogma of Christ's divinity is truly of Greek origin; primitive relation supplied but a pretext for it, its ground-work, as it were.

According to rationalists, this, then, is the

way in which the belief in the divinity of Jesus which was certainly held in the first century, must be accounted for. What must be thought of these conclusions and of the arguments on which they are based?

I

At the outset we may make a remark which applies not only to the present case, but also to many other similar ones. Even granting, for the time being, that the hypotheses just presented *do* explain the formation of the dogma of Christ's divinity, granting, therefore, for the time being, that the theory of the Logos, as accepted by some more learned Christians, on one hand, and, on the other, a gross mistake and confusion on the part of the illiterate Christians, *suffice* to account for the appearance of that belief, does it follow that, as a matter of fact, the existence of that belief *must* be ascribed to these two causes? Are causes that *suffice* for the explanation of a phenomenon, necessarily its *real* causes? And, from the fact that the human mind or fancy could have excogitated this or that doctrine, does it follow that the object of this or that doctrine was not revealed? Of course, not; and yet this is just the sophism of which, in topics of this kind, our opponents

are constantly guilty. They strive to show that, strictly speaking, merely natural causes *could* account for the supernatural facts which we place before them; they make no endeavor to show that, historically, these causes, *and no other causes*, contributed in bringing about those facts, and yet *this* is what must be proved; for a *sufficient* explanation is not necessarily the *true* explanation.

In view of these remarks, we may now take up the discussion of the problem. First let us examine whether or not it is correct to assert that the dogma of Christ's divinity takes its origin from the application of the Philonian theory of the Logos to Christ.

The doctrine that asserts that Jesus Christ is the Word of God is met with in two passages of the New Testament,—in the Apocalypse, and at the beginning of the Fourth Gospel; and this we may observe in passing certainly favors the identity of authorship of these two writings. The Apocalypse (XIX, 13) has but one mention: "*His name*", it says, speaking of the mysterious rider, who is Jesus Himself, "*is the Word of God*". The Fourth Gospel is still more explicit. It begins with these well known verses: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was in God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things*

were made by Him : and without Him was made nothing that was made. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth. " Thus St. John teaches that the Word was at the beginning, i. e., before the world was created ; that that Word was in God, or more exactly, according to the Greek text, beside God, and, as it were, pressed against His bosom ; that that Word was God and was the organ of creation, and also that, later, in order to make Himself better known, and reveal the Father, He became flesh and dwelt among us.

This is, in the history of theology, the earliest appearance of the name and doctrine of the Logos : that doctrine goes back to the first century and is set forth in an inspired and preeminently canonical writing, the Gospel according to St. John.

But how did St. John come to conceive that doctrine ? Did he get it from Greek philosophy and Philo, or from other sources ? Briefly, our answer is this : the *word* Logos, or Word, may have come, nay, I grant, did perhaps come to St. John from Greek philosophy and Philo ; but as to the *idea*, the *teaching*, expressed and conveyed by that word, no. The Word, as

conceived by St. John, bears indeed the same *name* as Philo's Word : but, considered in themselves and in reality, they greatly differ.

I have just said that the thought of designating Christ by the *name* Logos, may have come, nay did perhaps come to St. John from Greek philosophy. In fact this is the view of quite a number of Catholic critics whom I hold in high esteem ; and yet, reluctant as I am to disagree with them, some considerations that have not been sufficiently taken into account may be invoked in favor of the other view. First, it is rather strange that the name Logos is met with for the first time in the Apocalypse, unquestionably the most Jewish in tone of all the books of the New Testament. Its author is certainly a genuine Jew, by no means a Hellenist, and it would be wonderful indeed if he had introduced in his book a term that came from Hellenism. Then, and this is the main consideration, we must not fail to notice St. John's clear purpose closely to connect the prologue of the Gospel with the first chapter of Genesis. In that chapter Moses relates how the creation took place; St. John has in mind what was *before* the creation, and explains the creation from a religious standpoint : " *In the beginning* ", we read in Genesis, " *God created heaven and earth. The earth was void and empty; darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved over the waters. God said : Be light*

made! and light was made "; and the narrative goes on in seven strophes, each one of them beginning with the words : *God said;* and concluding with this burden : *And there was an evening, and there was a morning;* this was the first... the second... the sixth day. We may observe that in this narrative the Spirit of God is already mentioned in the second verse, and that both the organization of the world and the various beings are produced by the *word of God,* as an organ : " *God said : Be light made.* " Now what St. John intends to place before us is precisely that creative word, that Word creator. Hence his first word is also : *In the beginning,* ἐν ἀρχῇ : but instead of adding : *God created heaven and earth,* he tells us of that Word by whom God created and who was before the creation : " *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was in God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him* (δι' αὐτοῦ, as if by an organ), *and without Him was made nothing that was made!*" And then, in order to emphasize still more the relation of his composition with the Mosaic narrative, St. John also, as has been remarked by Loisy, writes his prologue in a strophic form.

St. John then must not of necessity have borrowed from Philo, or from the Greeks, the term and concept of the Word creator : both were already in the book of Genesis and in many a passage of the book of Psalms ; and the concept

alone, in the books of Proverbs, Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. Long before St. John, and but a few years after Philo's death, St. Paul also had stated in the first epistle to the Corinthians. (VIII, 6,) that Jesus had been the organ of creation. But let us grant that St. John borrowed from the Greeks the name of Logos that he gave to Jesus Christ. Is the Logos as described by him really like the Word as presented by the Greeks and Philo? Can He be really a development thereof and, therefore, can we say that the Evangelist affirms the divinity of Jesus merely because the Greeks looked upon the Word as God? This is the question which we have now to examine.

To make answer at once, it might suffice to invoke a testimony which, in this case, would be hardly open to suspicion: the testimony of the leader of German Liberal Protestantism, Harnack. In his *History of Dogma*[1], the latter affirms that " the elements operative in the Johannine theology were not Greek Theologoumena ", and that " even the Logos " (of St. John) " has little more in common with that of Philo than the name ". This assertion is indeed valuable: however, we may investigate the question ourselves. It is no easy task to state with accuracy the Greek notion of the Logos.

[1] I, p. 93. English transl., vol. I. p. 97.

for that notion varies with the schools. Of all the schools where that concept is found, the oldest is the Stoic. According to the Stoics, God and the world, matter and spirit, are not two distinct substances : there is but one substance in the universe,—matter, which is, however, endowed with energy and reason. That force which penetrates even the minor elements of matter and is one in itself, is God : it is at times designated under the name *logos*, a word that has hardly its equivalent in any modern language, and signifies at once intelligence, will, active and mechanical energy. Considered in its substance, that energy, as we have said, is unique, but, like the stem of a tree, it branches out into secondary energies that are its various expressions. At times these secondary forces or energies are called λόγοι σπερματικοί, spermatic or seminal Words. Thus, according to the Stoics, the Logos is simply God :—God immanent in matter and in the world, the energy that animates matter and the world, who unceasingly unfolds His reality through His energy and action, and who, while preserving therein unity as the ἕξις or bond of all beings, acts also as a τόμευς, a dividing logos, and prevents confusion.

The Platonic concept of the Logos is somewhat different. Platonicians distinguished God from the world and thought that God had fashioned

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the visible world after the pattern of an intelligible world intermediate between the external world and Himself. Every species of beings was but the imperfect reproduction of a type or idea that preëxisted in God. As the result of a syncretist tendency of a later date, these types, ideas, and intelligible images, were identified with the spermatic word of the Stoics and were, likewise, called λόγοι, whilst the name Logos was given to the collection of these words, or even to the place where they can be found, i. e., the divine mind. According to the Later Academy, the Word is not God, He is the world of ideas—an intermediary between God and the visible world. Besides, these ideas are not mere image-ideas or types, they are power-ideas ("idées-forces") that imprint themselves, as it were, in matter, and mould it on their own likeness.

It was when this sort of fusion between Stoicism and Platonism was going on that Philo made his appearance. Philo is an Alexandrian Jew, about whose life we know but little; but we do know that he applied himself eagerly to the study of philosophy, especially of Greek philosophy, and strove to show how it agreed with the biblical revelation. His numerous writings, which fill two folios, are by no means easy to read, especially because their author, whose erudition is extensive, puts side by side a great many ideas borrowed from many sources

and does not take the trouble to bring them into harmony nor to show how they all agree. He too, even more so than all his predecessors, studied the question of the Logos, and his presentation of the subject is the most composite that can be imagined. According to one of the latest expo-nents of Philo's philosophic and religious ideas,[1] Philo's Logos resembles, all at once, the Logos of Heraclitus and the Stoics, that of the Platonicians and the Neo-Pythagoricians, and even that of the Helleno-Egyptian myths, which are related by Plutarch in his treatise on Isis and Osiris. Thus, like the Logos of the Stoics, Philo's Logos is the cosmic force that holds together all the various parts of the world and sets them in order; he is the *right Logos* who inspires virtues. Like the Logos of the Platonicians, he is the collection of all ideas, or the place for type-ideas according to which God fashioned matter and which have been imprinted upon it. In common with the Logos of the Neo-Pythagoricians, he is the principle of number, the unity that divides into two the six divine powers and the six elements. But all this, M. Bréhier, remarks, does not at all reveal Philo's intimate thought on the subject of the Logos. Unlike the Greek philosophers, he was not bent on explain-

[1] É. Bréhier : *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie*, Paris, 1908.

ing the origin and continuance of the world. His purpose was, on one hand, to uphold the Platonic concept of extasis, in the sense of a direct intuition of God that could be attained here below only by an *élite* of wise men; and, on the other, to supply the rank and file of mankind with an object of worship adapted to their mediocre religious aspirations. As regards piety, Philo distinguishes, then, three categories of men. There are those who look upon the world as a God and pay it some sort of worship: these are, properly speaking, the impious. Then, there are the perfect who either directly and at a single bound, as it were, or by means of a series of intermediaries, rise to God in contemplation and pay Him their duties; these are very few. Moreover, between these two extremes, there are many who are neither wicked nor, on the other hand, capable of thus ascending to God considered in Himself. They can reach God only as found in the supersensible word of ideas, i. e., in His image. The proper object of their worship is the Logos. Philo's main purpose in framing the Logos theory was, then, to procure to the crowd an object of worship: the Logos is an intermediary being, inferior to God, to whom He himself pays a perfect worship, but superior to the world: the religion of the imperfect stops at Him. Whilst He is inferior to God, He is His instrument of action, He is His inner word

in the souls of men, the word by which God reveals Himself, though imperfectly; for, unlike the sense of sight, a word cannot give us the knowledge of the divine essence. "And thus", M. Bréhier concludes, "we come to realize how the divine Logos (identical with the revealed Word and inner worship) is, as it were, a debased notion of God, another God, for the worship of the imperfect. The Logos is a discourse, a formula, beyond which one must go in order to come to the direct vision of the being. He is inferior to God just as the hearing, through which we get knowledge from language, is inferior to sight which makes us see beings. To attain the divine Logos, then, is to reach a *divine formula* which expresses God in the soul; and therefore, it is to understand, not indeed what God is, but rather, that God is very remote from the τῷ *fieri*... The Logos divides and unites God and the soul at the same time. On one hand, He is a boundary between the visible world and the divinity; on the other hand, considered as a prayer and a worship, He is our supplication with God, our High Priest, He prays for the whole world with which He is clad as with a vestment [1].

This is the concept of the Philonian Logos that can be drawn from the writings of the

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

Alexandrian Jew, though we readily grant that not all those who have studied Philo's works agree on accepting our sentiment. His thoughts are so obscure and entangled that it is easy to make a mistake, and that, at all events, various interpretations are unavoidable. Out of the Logos, the God-energy of the Stoics, the Logos, or intelligible world of the Platonicians, the Logos-Number of the Pythagoricians, Philo strove—and this was his personal contribution—to make a Logos-worship' a religious being and an object of religion that was not the Supreme God, but an intermediate being between man and God.

Does Philo look upon that being as a personal being or a mere abstraction? As neither. At the time and in the place he lived, people were wont to view the personal gods of mythology as mere allegorical representations of the forces of nature, or of the principles of ethics. Considered in that light those gods ceased, though not altogether, to be concrete and definite persons, and were looked upon as half-abstract and half-concrete beings, to which every individual granted that amount of reality which he chose. Philo's Logos belongs to this category. It would be a mistake to say that He is a concrete person, but likewise, it would be an exaggeration to say that He is a mere abstraction :—and this lack of precision which is unacceptable to our minds,

was easily stomached by the minds of old.

Besides, it may be observed that that Logos has no relation whatever to the Messias. Philo speaks but very little of the Messias, and he looks upon Him as a temporal ruler void of any superhuman greatness. *A fortiori*, the Jewish philosopher has no idea of the possibility of the Incarnation. In his eyes, the Logos is in opposition to the flesh, just as idea is opposed to matter, and the Alexandrian Jew has too much contempt for matter and for the body ever to dream even of the mere possibility of closer relations between the body and the dignity of the Word.

This, then, is Philo's Logos. Is this really the Logos spoken of by St. John, and the divine Word whom we adore? The Greek Logos was a merely cosmic energy; Philo assigned to Him, besides, a religious function; in St. John, the Word has only a religious character, and the attribution of creation to Him has but one purpose, viz., to explain how, even before the Incarnation, the Word was in the world and yet the world knew Him not. Whilst Philo's Logos holds out an imperfect God's stead, *de facto*, he is not God; he is but His image, His first-born, in comparison with the visible world, which is His younger son, as it were; he himself adores God; whereas St. John asserts plainly that, from the very beginning, the Word was

in God, and that the Word was God. In these few points there is, then, a vast difference between Philo's and St. John's Logos. Far from taking the place of the Almighty in religious worship, the Christian Word comes upon earth and puts on our body only to reveal the Father, and bring Him adorers : " *No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared Him* " (*John, I, 18*). And how was that revelation made? Through the Incarnation. Philo's Word cannot become incarnate, unless he ceases to be; St. John's Word speaks of His pre-existence in the Father's bosom only to lead us to His Incarnation. The Evangelist does not write the story of some metaphysical being, nor treat of some metaphysical, or even religious speculations : his purpose is to narrate the life of the Redeemer who has become one of us, and say how we may respond to the message of life and light He has brought us. In the Fourth Gospel, there is no mention whatever of the division of men into two categories—the perfect and the imperfect—as regards the worship to be paid to God. Furthermore, whilst Philo's views are complex, confused, and uncertain, and his Logos vague and indefinite, St. John's teaching is firm, precise, and practical, and his Word, definite, personal, and, as it were, firmly set in concrete reality. The latter of these Words cannot have originated from the

former. As has been said before, there may be between the two, a similarity of name; there is no similarity of concept and function.

It is, then, unhistorical to say that some Christians seeing in Jesus Philo's Logos, ascribed to Him the divinity which that philosopher ascribed to his Logos, and to explain thus the belief in Christ's divinity. It is true that during the second and even the third century, some Christian writers—Justin, Tatian, Hippolytus, and chiefly Origen,—under the influence of Greek philosophy with which they were impregnated, applied indeed to the Christian Logos some of the speculations that the Greeks formed about their Logos. But instead of strengthening the dogma of Christ's divinity, these speculations jeopardized it, through the addition of philosophic theories that have nothing to do with it. St. Irenaeus—a man of tradition—had but contempt for such speculations, and the Church herself came forward to reprove those who framed them :—which shows that, in this particular case, far from serving dogma and contributing to build it up, Greek and Philonian philosophy was working to its detriment and tended to do away with it altogether.

II

Now, we take up the second naturalistic way of explaining the origin of the belief in Christ's divinity. Our task being easier, our remarks will be also shorter.

We are told that, as it was impossible to preach to the heathen Jesus as the Messias, He was preached to them under the synonymous title, Son of God. In the eyes of the Jews, the Messias was preeminently God's adopted Son, His Son of predilection, both for His dignity and virtues. Besides, there soon grew a tradition that represented Him as born of a virgin through some divine action, and consequently as the Son of God in some way. The heathen deluded themselves into the belief that the word, son, was to be taken in a strict and obvious meaning, and so they thought that Jesus was really and physically born of God, and concluded that He possessed the divine nature, that he was God. They were led to accept that flagrant error by their previous Greek and polytheistic education.

What seems to me flagrant is rather the puerility of the explanation that is proposed, as well as the disproportion between the fact to be explained and what is given as its cause. For in order that this explanation may be deemed

satisfactory, we must admit first, that, in the eyes of the first Christian generation, Jesus was a mere man, the Son of God only in the moral sense; next, that the title, Son of God, applied by the earliest preachers of the Gospel to the heathen to designate Him, gave rise, in the minds of the latter, to a confusion which they could not avoid and which the missionaries carefully abstained from clearing up; we must admit, besides, that the divine operation through which Mary conceived was understood in a very coarse sense, and that here again, the religious authorities did not dispel the misunderstanding; and lastly, that, as a result of that misunderstanding, people were led to accept not merely the Savior's divinity taken in a broad, i. e., in a moral sense, but His divinity in a strict sense by reason of which He existed before all creation and all centuries. So many gratuitous, nay most unlikely and false suppositions.

We may begin with the last. Pagan mythology tells, indeed, of many personages born of the union either of some gods and mortal women, or of some men and goddesses : such, for instance, the Dioscuri, Hercules, Esculapius, and Aeneas, the son of Venus and Anchises. After their death some, not all though, of these sons of gods or goddesses, were, more or less, deified. At all events, no Greek ever thought of saying that those semi-gods existed before

their earthly birth, and that they were the creators of the world, eternal beings and gods in the strict sense of the word. But, then, why should they have said it of Christ? Why would they have looked upon Him as one of those celebrated heroes whose legendary accounts supplied the material for poetical narratives? And yet, so they did, and therefore, we must see the reason thereof elsewhere than in a misunderstanding as regards the way Mary conceived and brought forth her Son.

But, as a matter of fact, was there such a misunderstanding? No: in the whole Christian literature there is no trace of it whatever; nay, the contrary is asserted at every step. We all know the Gospel narrative of the Annunciation:—a narrative which is unanimously looked upon as very ancient;—we know too its tone of divine delicacy and reserve. In his first Apology to the Emperors (33), about the year 150, St. Justin comments upon Isaia's prophecy about the Virgin-mother, but he observes expressly that that miraculous conception has nothing in common with the similar facts that are found in pagan fables. In that motherhood, everything is pure and supernatural. This has always been the view and language of all Christians, and, as certified also by St. Justin, the Christian sense would have rebelled even at the thought of any other language.

But, then, are we to suppose that the title Son of God, used in the moral sense of adoption, was misunderstood by the heathen and taken to designate a true sonship? Why should we do so? Was there any great difficulty in making a distinction between these two kinds of sonships? Were the Greeks unacquainted with it? All their writers, St. Justin observes [1], gave to Jupiter the name of father of men and gods; no doubt they did not intend to signify a true paternity. Most of the Epistles of St. Paul were addressed to churches where the Greeks formed the majority; St. Paul insists again and again upon the idea that we are God s adopted children in Jesus Christ. The concept of adopted and moral sonship, then, was not unknown to the Greeks. Nor should we forget the character of these to whom such a mistake is imputed. There is one book that surpasses in sublimity all the other books of the New Testament :—the Fourth Gospel. " The man who wrote it is so great ", Godet remarks [2], that, " if he was truly, as has been claimed by some, the author of the Savior's discourses that he relates, he should be deemed undoubtedly equal to Jesus Himself ". And this man fell into the incredible mistake that has been pointed out! For it is mainly in *his*

[1] *Apol.*, 1, 22.

[2] *Commentaire sur l'évangile de saint Jean*, 4th edit., Neuchatel, 1, p. 182, (English Transl.).

work that Christ's divine sonship is given, not as a mere moral sonship of adoption, but as a true and genuine sonship. The author of the Fourth Gospel—a Greek convert or a Hellenistic Jew, according to Liberal critics—would have allowed himself to be deceived by a difficulty that even a child could easily solve!

Furthermore, we must examine the assertion which is at the basis of all those sophisms, or rather, in support of which all these sophisms have been accumulated : viz., that at the beginning the earliest Judaeo-Christian generation saw in Jesus but a mere man, favored with divine gifts. The complete refutation of that view would take us too far : we would have to study whether or not the first Apostles and the first Christians believed in Christ's divinity, and also whether or not Christ revealed Himself as God : these questions are excellently treated in Father Lepin's book, *Christ and the Gospel*[1]. The following remarks based on his work may suffice, I think. When the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who wrote about the years 63-66, represents the Son as the author and preserver of creation, as superior to the angels by whom He is adored, as the splendor of the Father's glory and the expression of His personality, surely He does not present Him as a mere crea

[1] English Transl., Philadelphia, 1910.

ture. Again, when St. Paul, a Jew among the Jews, and who belonged to the first Christian generation, calls Christ the God blessed above all things (*Rom.*, IX, 5), and describes Him as filled with the divinity that dwells in Him, both the organ and the end of creation; when he speaks of that affluence which Christ gave up to become poor like one of us; and of the "form" of God in which He was and which He willingly surrendered in order to adopt the "form" of a slave; lastly, when the Apostle calls Him God's *own* Son, whom God sent here below;—in all these instances, I say, can it be truly said that the Apostle saw in Jesus a mere man on whom the Holy Ghost had come down? And if we go back to the words of Jesus Himself,—leaving aside those words of His recorded in the Fourth Gospel—: when He insists on showing that His Sonship as regards the Father is unlike that of His disciples and Apostles, and that He is *the true* Son, whereas the prophets and just of the Old Law were only servants and God's children by grace; when He declares that God's angels are His angels and His subordinates, to whom He gives commands; when He asserts that no one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father, but the Son, and thus lays down between the Father and the Son a reciprocity and an equality that places both on the same level and implies that both have the

same nature; lastly, when we see Him perform His miracles with supreme calm and facility, and impart the same power to His Apostles, forgive sins as though He was the master of consciences and impart also the same privileges to His Apostles; declare Himself the supreme Judge of the living and the dead; claim for Himself a right over the person of the Holy Spirit whom He promises to send after His ascension—and all these details are found in the Synoptics—; when we see all that, can we really hold that Jesus was not conscious of His divinity and told His first disciples nothing on the subject?—No, we cannot; and, therefore one is compelled either to accept simply the traditional belief, or follow in Loisy's footsteps and look upon the words and facts where that consciousness and that revelation of the Savior are consigned, as subsequent additions and interpolations due to the "redactors" of the Gospels: a very cheap way to avoid a conclusion that cannot but be accepted, and evade arguments that are simply irrefutable.

From whatever standpoint we look at the question, we must, then, assert that the dogma of Christ's divinity does not originate from Greek mentality and philosophy, that it is not of Greek origin. No doubt, Hellenism supplied Christian theology with a language in which to express

itself, and with some forms of thought into which the latter cast, as it were, the matter of divine revelation. That adaptation had to be made, in order that revelation might be understood by the Greek world for whom the Christian message was destined, as well as for the Jews. But these external forms neither reached nor, therefore, altered its substance. Whether we read the substance of Christian belief in the Synoptics or in St. John, in the Apocalypse or in St. Paul, in the New Testament or in subsequent ecclesiastical writers, it is always the same; for it comes not from human conceptions and philosophical systems, but from God's word and authority.

WAS THE CHURCH FOUNDED BY JESUS CHRIST AND WITH THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF CATHOLICISM?

But a short time ago, Mgr Pierre Batiffol published a work entitled *Primitive Catholicism* [1]. His purpose was to substitute for the Protestant biased presentation of the rise and character of the first Christian communities, a true and objective description of their rise and character, based on the best ascertained historical data. The work of the distinguished scholar received high praise at the hands of reviewers. Now my aim in this essay is not exactly to analyze it, but rather to set its main idea in relief, and thus facilitate the perusal of a book which we trust will be read both by our friends and our opponents, by those who are Catholics and those who do not belong to our Church.

[1] New York and London, 1911 —The title of the French original is *L'Eglise naissante et le Catholicisme.*

I

As Catholics, we believe that Christ himself founded that supernatural society which is called the Church; that He Himself gathered its first members, established in that society a visible authority with the mission to teach and guide it, and lastly, that He placed at the head of the representatives of that authority a leader who is the supreme teacher of the faith, and the center of unity. These, I call the characteristic features of Catholicism.

We believe that the Church was born, as it were, with these characteristics. The claims of Liberal Protestantism are altogether different. Just as Liberal Protestants deny the dogmas of the Trinity and Christ's divinity, and attempt to account naturally for their formation, so likewise, they deny the revealed and supernatural origin of the Church and strive to explain her rise and existence by the play of merely natural forces. According to Sabatier, in his work *The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*[1], Harnack and his school, and, to some extent, Loisy, Christ never thought of establishing His religion in the shape of a visible society governed by a visible author-

[1] English transl., New York, 1904.

ity; He merely sowed ideas, as it were; He cast broad and wide and confided more especially to the crowd of listeners and the inner circle of disciples who followed Him, the deepest and most impressive teachings regarding God, conscience, the world, and suffering:—immortal sayings on which mankind will feed till the end of time. But His own personal work hardly extended any further. Of a Church He did not even dream; and how could He have thought of it, M. Loisy observes, since He deemed the end of the world and universal destruction close at hand?

Now, after Pentecost, the early faithful believed, like Jesus, in the imminence of the end of the world and the near return of Christ as judge of the living and the dead. That faith, which was their common bond, naturally grouped their souls into a sort of spiritual society. No wonder besides that in such a society there was no need whatever of a doctrinal or disciplinary authority, and of an external direction. The Spirit was everywhere, nay was everything. To some He imparted the gift of edifying the brethren by exhortation; to others, the gift of prophecy; to others, the power to speak in unknown tongues, or that of interpreting them, or even of curing diseases. As a result of those *charisms,* or gifts of the Spirit, there were apostles, evangelists, teachers, prophets, *didascali,* interpreters, *thera-*

peutæ, a whole crowd of " spiritual men ", who held their commission only from the Spirit who filled them, but who did not represent any established authority, nor any permanent institution.

However, permanency and stability did come. It came, simply because the world was not destroyed and Jesus did not return. As a result of St. Paul's missionary work, Christ's disciples had greatly increased in number. Unless it were to be dissolved in anarchy, that multitude could no longer remain without some organization that would hold together its members. Besides, St. Paul looking upon believers as a whole, as the society of souls gathered together in the expectation of Christ, had used the word *Ecclesia* (Church), and had represented that Church as Christ's spouse longing for His coming. That conception, which was first merely ideal, tended gradually to become more and more real and concrete. Transient ministry, represented by the charisms, assumed a permanent character. There were in the Christian communities, by the side of missionary apostles who were constantly on the go from one place to the other, catechists and teachers—" doctores "—appointed for the speciad purpose of edifying the faithful, deacons who were entrusted with the care of the poor, presbyters whose business it was to watch over the conduct of the faithful, and to preside over the common prayer, and *episcopi*

who had charge of the common fund. Those communities, which were first independent and bound together only by the bond of charity, gradually became conscious of their solidarity. For the first time, about the year 107, St. Ignatius pronounced the word—the *Church Catholic.* Above the scattered unities, there was formed a great unity that included all and combined all in one whole. A center was needed for that unity: the capital of the Empire was naturally designated for that function: Rome then appeared. Thus, under the pressure of circumstances, the Church's organism was formed and grew little by little.

It drew a great deal of strength chiefly from two historical crises. The first was the Gnostic crisis which fills the history of the second century. Gnosticism is the attempt of philosophy to swallow faith and take the place of the Gospel. Against Gnosticism the Church states her belief with more accuracy, formulates it in a creed *ne varietur*.—the so called *Creed of the Apostles*—and lays down the authority of the bishops as a barrier against pseudo-science. The second crisis was the Montanist crisis. About the year 172, Montanism represents the striving of the spiritual man, the prophet, private inpiration, charism, to seize again the leadership of the Christian communities, which they realize is departing from their hands for the benefit of the hierarchy.

Montanism is defeated and the hierarchy succeeds in having not only its privilege of teaching, but also its power of government and direction strenghtened. Catholicism is thus created and towards the middle of the third century, St. Cyprian can justly affirm (*Letter* XXXIII n. 1,) that the Church is built upon the bishops, and that all her acts must be determined by them; and that such is the established order and the law divine.

This is, in a few words, the description of the Church's origin and formation, as presented by Liberal Protestantism. The Church was not founded by Jesus Christ; at the beginning it was but the assembly of Christ's disciples, joined together by the expectation of the parousia, acknowledging no doctrinal or disciplinary authority whatever; subject only to the inner directions of the Spirit; an amorphous multitude which under the pressure of needs and circumstances, became slowly an organism; and which precisely could not become an organism, nor develop as it did into Catholicism, without losing its first character of Church of the Spirit, and without surrendering the Christ-given freedom of the Gospel.

Now this is the view of the origin of the Church, which we must examine at the light of history; and to do so I shall not take as late a

date in that history as our opponents do : were I to follow their example, our demonstration would be very easy indeed. We are told that Montanism was the crisis that supplied the opportunity of formulating the theory of Apostolic succession and of representing the bishops as the inheritors of the Apostles' powers. But that assertion is already found wholly in the first Epistle of St. Clement, which was written between the years 93 97, i. e., some eighty years before the rise of Montanism. In chapters XLIV and XLVII, Clement lays down the order in which authority is transmitted in the Church. That order is as follows : Christ was sent by God; the Apostles were sent by Jesus Christ; and in their turn, the Apostles established bishops and deacons, and decided that after these first bishops and deacons, other bishops and deacons should succeed them and take up their ministry. St. Ignatius of Antioch, who wrote about the year 107, is never done dwelling on the duty to obey the bishop, priests and deacons, as the representatives of God, Jesus Christ, and the Apostles; and nascent Montanism soon came to realize the effective strength of that hierarchy which thwarted immediately its advance and kept it within its Phrygian mountains.

Again, we are told that Gnosticism gave the Church the opportunity to frame for herself a

formulary of faith, and to advance the claim of determining in fact what the people must believe. But the Roman baptismal symbol, that which we call the Apostles' Creed, was in existence before the earliest manifestations of Gnosticism —since it dates back, at least, to the first years of the second century—and even then, we hear St. Ignatius assert that, inasmuch as the bishops of the whole world possess Christ's teaching, the faithful must receive the bishops' teaching, that they, too, may possess the teaching of Christ[1]; and that to abandon that teaching is to feed on foreign herbage, which is heresy[2]. Long before Montanus and long before the rise of Gnosis, the principle of doctrinal and disciplinary authority existed in the Church. The Church of Ignatius, the Church of Clement, that of the *Didachè*, i. e., the Church at the end of the first and the beginning of the second century, was not, or was no longer that confused multitude imagined by Protestants : she possessed an organization, a symbol, a hierarchy, and bishops; the faith and conduct of her members were not left to individual initiative, nor to the mere suggestions of the inner Spirit. St. Ignatius gives her the name *Catholic,* and, in fact, she had already the characteristics of Catholicism. Rome

[1] *Eph.*, III, 2; IV, 1.
[2] *Trall.*, VI, 1-VII, 1.

—that Church which the same Ignatius greets as presiding in the imperial City, and which intervened in the dissensions of the Corinthian Church; that Church in whose name Clement wrote that famous letter styled by Renan the *first decretal*— Rome, I say, held the first place in the early Church.

We need not insist and, as it were, break open a door that is already open. At the end of the first century, Catholicism is a living reality and the Church that appears on the surface of history is a Catholic Church.

But was this also the case *before* that epoch? To answer this question, we may resume the method which we have already followed in the first of these essays—that on the Trinity—and examine successively our documents from the end of the first century back to the time of Christ himself. This study, I hope, will enable us to draw firm and luminous conclusions.

II

In the very last years of his life, about the year 66, St. Paul wrote the Epistles that are called *pastoral :* the Epistle to Titus, and the two Epistles to Timothy. Protestant critics, whilst admitting that these documents are substantially authentic, think that they were tampered with

subsequently, mainly because they favor too much the claims of Catholicism. Such a reason, of course, will not deter us from pursuing our inquiry. Rather, let us say that these letters are, as it were, the last will of the great Apostle, who has left therein to his chosen disciples, Titus and Timothy, his last recommendations. What recommendations? I recall them from the text: he tells them to keep unsullied the deposit of the sound instructions he has given them on the subject of faith; to take as coadjutors dependable men, who can teach others the same truths; to shun empty and profane discourses, and all the objections of a science that does not deserve that name; to charge some people not to spread other doctrines; to reprove and threaten them, and exhort them in season and out of season; then, to establish in every city priests and bishops —*presbyteri* and *episcopi*—who, among other qualifications, must be firmly attached to the doctrine he has inculcated upon them, so that they may exhort according to the sound doctrine and refute the gainsayers. We may observe that Timothy and Titus themselves are like vicars-apostolic, who are entrusted at Ephesus and in Crete, respectively, with the duty to organize, as is expressly stated by St. Paul, the communities of Asia Minor and Crete. Under them, there are elders—*presbyteri*—who teach and upon whom Timothy has laid his hands,

just as he himself has received the imposition of the hands of the *presbyterium* and St. Paul. How remote we are from an invisible Church, whose members would be subject merely to private inspiration! What is predominant in those churches, as described by the pastoral Epistles, is authority, rule, regulated service. Paul gives orders like a master, and he exhorts Titus and Timothy to do likewise. Hymenæus and Alexander have failed to abide by the Apostle's teachings. The latter gives them up to Satan, i. e., excommunicates them in order to teach them not to blaspheme. Others make schisms and sow dissensions; Paul charges Titus to sever them from the Christian communities after two warnings. The Church condemns already heresy and rejects schismatics from her bosom.

The Epistles written during St. Paul's captivity, from the year 58 to the year 62, place the same sight before us. It is in those Epistles, particularly in the Epistle to the Ephesians, that the Apostle exposes, as it were, the speculative theology of the Church. Before the coming of Christ, Jews and heathens made up two peoples that not only were distinct, but opposed and fought each other. Between them, there was a wall of separation. The death of Christ has thrown it down, and since then these two peoples have made but one; now the heathen

are no longer strangers nor passing guests ; they are the fellow—citizens of the saints and members of God's family, being built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, of which Christ Himself is the keystone. It is in Him that the whole well built structure rises, to make up one holy temple in the Lord ; it is in Him that the Ephesians are built so as to be through the Holy Ghost God's dwelling place.

The metaphors of which St. Paul makes use in that passage, are worthy of notice. Christians are a family, the family of the saints ; a people, the people of saints : two figures that imply the idea of a society. Nay, they are a building, a house, God's temple, in which everyone of the faithful is a stone and holds a definite place : there can hardly be a more perfect unity. But the Apostle expresses his meaning with still more vigor. A temple is but a lifeless unit ; the Church is much more ; she is the body of which Christ is the head, she is Christ's body, a body of which Christians are the members, and which receives from its head its growth and expansion, till it reaches the stature that becomes Christ. This is, indeed, organic unity. Christians are all bound together like the various parts of the same body, and they are joined to Christ, as the parts of the body are joined to the head. From Him life flows and is diffused into all the members, while these members are bound by

one common bond of fellowship and, when one suffers, all others must also suffer (*Eph.*, IV, V).

That this is not the unorganized and individualistic multitude, imagined by Liberal critics, is evident. And let them not say that in these speculative considerations, St. Paul has in view an ideal Church, which he conceives as in a dream, a Church that was to become a reality only after the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. No; St. Paul speaks of the Church of his time, of the concrete churches of Ephesus, Colossae, and other places; for it is during his lifetime that God's temple was to be built and Christ's body, to grow. "*This is why*" the Apostle continues, "*Jesus gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : until we all meet into the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ*" (*Eph.*, IV, 11-13.) These words are very plain No doubt, St. Paul delights in speculating; but he is no mere theorist : none addressed himself to tangible realities more than he did. He does not refer merely to the Church in general; in the Epistle to the Colossians, he mentions by name and especially the Church of Laodicea. The communities to which he writes are churches,

i. e., genuine societies. In the Church of Philippi, he greets its episcopi and deacons, in other words, its rulers; he entreats all to keep the unity of faith, since they profess but one God and one baptism; and to abide by the faith just as handed down from his teaching and those of his disciples, since those teachings have been imparted in virtue of a divine delegation, by God's ambassadors. The faithful must instruct and correct one another, pray together, and worship together. In truth, where in all this can we find the trace of a purely spiritual and invisible Church?

But perhaps we may find it in the other Epistles of St. Paul,— those which were written from the year 50 to the year 58. Here at last we meet charisms. St. Paul dwells on them at length, both in his Epistle to the Romans, and particularly in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. These charisms are of all kinds, and their use is a cause of disturbance in the assemblies of Christians. Now, the Apostle is decidedly averse to that confusion and disorder, where all speak at the same time and in tongues that cannot be understood by the assembly; and he, who holds authority, intervenes and promulgates rules that must be observed: "*If any speak with a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and in course, and let one interpret. But if there be no*

interpreter, let him hold his peace in the church, and speak to himself and to God. And let the prophets speak, two or three : and let the rest judge. But if anything be revealed to another sitting, let the first hold his peace... For the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the God of dissension, but of peace" (*I Cor.*, XIV, 27-33). A few pages before, the Apostle had already determined the order to follow in the celebration of the Agape and of the Eucharist ; he had commanded even that in the assembly women should be veiled and make no speech ; but these regulations are not enough for his sense of discipline : "*The rest*", he concludes, "*I will set in order, when I come.*" (*I Cor.*, XI, 34.) Authority, then, is exercised at Corinth, just as it is exercised at Ephesus and Colossae. Like those of Thessalonica and Galatia, the faithful of Corinth, make up a Church, not a purely ideal Church, but a concrete and visible society, a moral body where the principle of authority is indeed not lacking.

That authority manifests itself in those minute ordinances just referred to ; it asserts itself in matters of far greater importance. St. Paul is dissatisfied with the Corinthians ; he is still more dissatisfied with the Galatians. Some Judaizing teachers, Paul's personal enemies, have called his title of Apostle in question, protested against his teachings and convinced the Chris-

tian neophytes that they cannot be saved unless they take up again the Mosaic practices. Will St. Paul respect the so called liberty of free thinking, that is essential to an invisible and anarchical church? No, indeed; he asserts his mission : " *Paul, an Apostle, not by men nor by the intermediary of any man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father.* " (*Gal.*, I, 1.) He is an apostle, not, as we are told, because of a charism, but because of a divine call, and in virtue of a mission of Christ whom he has seen and from whom he holds his powers ; and the object of these powers, the purpose of that mission, is mainly, not to demonstrate, explain, discourse scientifically on the conditions of salvation, but to preach and teach the Gospel, to teach and exhort. The Gospel is neither a science nor a wisdom : it is a *catechesis*, a teaching : for " *the Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the gentiles, foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God* " (*I Cor.*, I, 22-24); and that teaching St. Paul has not created out of his own mind ; he has received it through revelation and tradition : " *I delivered unto you, first of all, which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He*

was seen by Cephas and then by the twelve." (*I Cor.*, XV, 3-5.) This is St. Paul's catechesis. And now, some are bold enough to despise that teaching, to deny it; some strive to bring back to Judaism the Christian neophytes; this cannot be. True Christians must withdraw from the company of those who depart from the received teaching (*Rom.*, XVI, 17) and thus cause divisions and scandals; they must be firm and keep the instructions that have been given them either by word of mouth or by letter (*II Thessal.*, II, 14). "*Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach to you a gospel besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema. As we said before, so now I say again: If any one preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema.*" (*Gal.*, I, 8, 9.) "*We pull down every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and we bring into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ*" (*II Cor.*, X, 5). "*I have said it before and I say it again beforehand... to them that sinned already and to all the rest, that, if I come again, I will not spare, since you seek a proof that Christ speaketh in me, who towards you is not weak, but is mighty in you*" (*II Cor.*, XIII, 2, 3.) Is this the language of a professor who endeavors to persuade his hearers, or that of an apostle who speaks with authority? Let us just ask ourselves what reply St. Paul would have given to some

one who would have come and told him of " free examen ", " spiritual Christianity ", " autonomous and independent conscience ", " religious faith independent of all doctrinal and disciplinary authority " ; and we hear fall from his lips that anathema against any one—even an angel—who would gainsay the Apostle's teaching, and that very outspoken assertion that, in the Church of God, the Spirit Himself must submit to the rules. Evidently St. Paul, with his revolutionary attitude and evangelical freedom, was a straight and plain Catholic.

III

If St. Paul and the churches to which he writes are Catholic, most likely the Church in her very cradle must also have been Catholic, for when the Apostle wrote his first Epistles, it had been in existence but for some twenty years. We may examine the question still more closely. Now, what do we actually find in the *Acts of the Apostles,* which is the history of the nascent Church? We are told by Liberal critics that the apostolate and the diverse ministries of the Church result merely from temporary charisms of the Holy Spirit; and yet, even before Pentecost, we see Joseph and Matthias presented by the assembled brethren to inherit Judas' aposto-

late (I, 15-26). Sometime later, the Apostles entrust to deacons the function of the support of widows: the assembly presents the candidates; but the Apostles confer the office upon them and lay hands upon them—a gesture which already signified among the Jews the conferring of some authority and mission (VI, 4-6). Then later the Holy Ghost chooses Paul and Barnabas to go and preach the Gospel; but He wills that, before leaving, the two Apostles should receive the imposition of hands of the prophets and teachers of Antioch (XIII, 3). In their turn, in the cities through which they proceed and in the churches which they found, Paul and Barnabas establish elders to preside over the new communities (XIV, 22). In other words, we behold everywhere the authority descending, as it were, from the first Apostles and organizing, through those whom they have selected, the early communities. James governs especially the Church of Jerusalem, and he is assisted by *elders*—we would say *priests*—who share in his labors. At Ephesus, we meet again those elders of whom St. Paul says that they have been established by the Holy Ghost as *episcopi* (overseers) to rule the Church of God (XX, 19, foll.).

On the other hand, at times the Holy Ghost does not come spontaneously and directly upon the newly baptized; that He may be conferred, the imposition of the hands of the Apostles is

necessary (VIII, 14-17). As to St. Peter, his precedency is asserted on every occasion. When a successor has to be given to Judas, he it is who comes forward and proposes him; he it is who delivers the first discourse before the Jews assembled. He is named apart: Peter and the eleven; Peter and the other Apostles. The Apostles are arrested; in the name of all, Peter addresses the Sanhedrim He it is who punishes Ananias and Sapphira, and in the Council of Jerusalem gives to the conflict its final solution. What then! Here are *episcopi* and *presbyteri,* and deacons, and one supreme leader of the Church; here are sacraments and liturgical reunions! What is lacking to that "primitive Catholicism"? A council? Here is one. The conversion of the Gentiles to the Church has given rise immediately to special difficulties. The first Christians, Jews by birth, have not forsaken altogether and at once the Mosaic observances, and they believe that these observances, are still obligatory for any one who intends to join the new people whom God has formed unto Himself. Is this the correct view, and shall the converts from paganism be obliged to be circumcised and keep the law? This was a grave question. A meeting which was attended by the Apostles and the elders, as well as Paul and Barnabas, who had returned from their mission, was held at Jerusalem. The question is carefully

examined ; the assembly come to a decision ; and that decision which they have conveyed to the brethren from heathenism through Barnabas and Silas, is as follows : "*It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no farther burden upon you than these necessary things : that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication*" (*Acts*, XV, 28-29); and, as is explicitly stated in the *Acts* (XVI, 4), in whatever city they go, Paul and Barnabas urge the execution of that decree. Verily who can fail to see in a Church thus organized, ruled and subject to all these regulations, the characteristics of a Church of authority, the characteristics of Catholicism ?

IV

Liberal Protestants have then but one resource left : that of claiming that the Apostles have failed to understand the mind of Jesus ; that Jesus Himself never intended to found a Church, i. e., a visible society of followers ; and that the Church, as has been said by M. Loisy, was beyond His perspective, since Christ had in mind only that kingdom of God which was to come together with the end of the world. According to St. Matthew (XVI, 18, 19), it is true, Christ spoke once of His Church, the Church which

He was planning to build and build on St. Peter; but these words are not authentic; they date back to about the year 100, i. e., to the time when the Roman pretensions to the primacy begin to appear. In reality, the Church proceeds in no way from the mind and will of Jesus; it has arisen and grown naturally, after the fashion of the Jewish synagogues, or that of the pagan *collegia* that were found almost all over the Empire.

Is this really the verdict of history and of the texts? We shall take up after a while the passage of St. Matthew's Gospel. We may just now consider the facts, and these are as follows. Jesus begins His ministry of preaching, and first a few men come and join Him. They are few; and yet He looks upon them as forming a distinct group, separated from those who do not know as yet the kingdom of God: "*To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but to them that are without, all things are done in parables.*" (*Mark*, IV, 11.) Hence some are within, and others without; some belong to the circle of the disciples, others do not. And what name does Christ give to that group? He calls it a flock whose shepherd He is: "*Fear not; little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.*" (*Luke*, XII, 32.) And again: "*It is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep shall be dispersed.*" (*Mark*, XIV, 27.) Jesus it is

who is first the only shepherd of that flock; but soon among those sheep He selects a few :—the Twelve. To them He gives power and authority over demons, and He sends them, first temporarily, to preach the kingdom of God (*Luke,* IX, I, 2). Later on, He confers on them the power to bind and to loose : " *Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven : and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven.* " To bind and to loose, what does this mean? This metaphor which is borrowed from Jewish theology, means to forbid or to allow. Among the Jewish teachers, some decided strictly the points of rabbinical casuistry, others with more benignity : of the former it was said that they bound; of the latter, that they loosed. Schammai, the rigorist, binds; Hillel, more lenient, looses. Likewise, the Apostles will bind or loose : but differently from the decisions of human teachers, whatever they have bound or loosed, i. e., forbidden or allowed upon earth, shall be forbidenn or allowed also in heaven; which means that they shall have the right to enact prescriptions or to dispense with them, and that their decisions will be ratified by God. The power of ruling conferred upon the Apostles could hardly he more expressly stated. Moreover, some time later, at the time of His ascension, Christ confirms their mission to make all the nations of the world the

pupils of the Gospel, and to bind them to whatever He has prescribed, assuring them, moreover, that He will be with them i. e., accompany them with His protection till the end of the world (*Matt.*, XXVIII, 20).

A small flock, it is true ; but a flock, nevertheless ; a supreme pastor, Jesus Christ ; a few Apostles, to whom He communicates a part of His power : is not this a Church, and a Church based on authority, as is claimed by Catholicism? You may ask : but where is the Pope ? Here he is. I said already that the authenticity of the text of St. Matthew, XVI, 18, 19, has been called in question particularly by M. Loisy. However, we must make the proper distinctions. What he does question is mainly the authenticity of the words : *I shall build my Church.* He grants that, on the whole, the " *Thou art Peter* " and the other words on which St. Peter's primacy is based, represent the mind of Jesus. He notes the *Feed my lambs, feed my sheep,* said to Peter, according to St. John's Gospel (XXI, 15-17), and the *Confirm thy brethren,* said to the same Apostle, according to St. Luke's Gospel (XXII, 32), and he concludes that these are " three echoes of the same tradition, all faithful as to the substance [1] ". Christ, then, has selected Peter from the others and placed him at the head of the

[1] *Le quatrième évangile*, 1903, p. 941.

Twelve; and the Church, a Church with distinct Catholic characters, is found already complete in the Gospel:—a flock, some shepherds, a supreme pastor.

Loisy, who for various reasons has kept the sense of reality much more than the Protestant Idealists of Germany, has not failed to notice the fact,—although he identifies the Church with God's kingdom,—and has expressed it in memorable terms: "Although the statement has been repeatedly made for several centuries", he writes in *The Gospel and the Church* [1], "it is difficult to understand, without the preparation of a special theological education, how the society of Christ was something less visible and less external than the Roman Church. That society, comprising those who accepted the gospel of Jesus, was not formed of pure spirits who had no other bond than a common sentiment. They were not numerous, but the fewer their numbers are reckoned at, the more distinctly they stand out against the surrounding world... They form a circumscribed group, perfectly distinct, a very centralized, even a hierarchical fraternity. Jesus is the centre and the chief, the incontestable authority. Around Him the disciples are not a confused mass: the Savior has distinguished among them the Twelve, and has associated

[1] English transl., p. 146-147.

them, directly and effectively, to His ministry; even among the Twelve, there is one who stands first, not only by priority of conversion or the ardor of his zeal, but by a kind of designation by the Master, accepted by the Apostolic community with consequences still evident in their history. This was a *de facto* situation, apparently brought about by the wanderings of the Galilean ministry, but also evidently received and ratified by Jesus some time before the Passion... The Church was born and endured through the development of an organization whose outline is traced in the Gospel."

Now, I come to the capital text that might be substituted for all that has been said thus far. Jesus is in the neighborhood of Cæsarea Philippi with His disciples only, and whilst they are walking, He asks them what men think of Him. He receives several answers. "*And you*", asks Jesus, "*whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt*

loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." (*Matt.*, XVI, 16-19.)

We find in this text the word *Church;* and that Church is the Church of Jesus Christ; that Church is described as an edifice which He will build on a rock; and that rock, in the metaphorical sense, is the Apostle Peter, whose name, in Hebrew, lends itself to this manner of speaking and who, moreover, receives both the keys of the kingdom and the power to allow or to forbid. All our thesis is in that text; no wonder then that Liberal critics have done their very best to get rid of it. They have denied that the words, *Thou art Peter and upon this rock,* belonged to the primitive text of St. Matthew : a gratuitous supposition; for none of the MSS of the Gospels bears any trace of hesitation or divergence. Again, they have advanced that the words : *Whatsoever thou shalt bind,* and *I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,* were said to all the Apostles. Even were this the case, the cause of Liberal criticism would have hardly gained anything; but this is another merely gratuitous supposition that has no support whatever, nay, is formally contradicted by the text. The words, *Upon this rock I will build my Church,* have been next attacked. Christ, they say, could not have said them. He could not have spoken of a *Church* since the idea of a Church is St.Paul's creation; nor could He have spoken of *building*

the Church, for this is also a metaphor peculiar to St. Paul; and lastly, He could not have spoken either of *His* Church, but, at most, of the Church of God, for it is under this appellation that the Church is first presented to us in the New Testament.—Unfortunately for Liberal critics, all these impossibilities are merely imaginary. St. Paul did not create the *word* Church, Ἐκκλησία; it existed already in the Septuagint, and, besides, Christ used it elsewhere to designate the religious assembly in general; nor did the Apostle create the *thing* itself; since, as we have seen, Christ had founded it, when He gathered His first disciples. The expression *to build the Church* may be somewhat bold, when used to express the founding of a society; but that metaphor was called for by the name of Peter himself, Kepha, a solid rock,—a word upon which Christ is evidently playing. Lastly, as to saying that the Savior could not have spoken of *His* Church, one forgets that Jesus gave Himself as God's messenger and representative, and spoke of God's kingdom as His own kingdom, and claimed that He had received from the Father all power to rule everything in His name. To say the word, the *Tu es Petrus* is rejected, because it is deemed to echo the Roman pretensions of the end of the first century. Indeed we do not deny that these words do support the claims of Rome; but Liberal critics ought to prove preci-

sely that those claims have no foundation and can have no foundation in the Gospel, and that they are, as it were, the spontaneous product of an ambition, of which there is no trace whatever in the period to which we are referred to.

Hence the XVIth chapter (v. 16-19) of St. Matthew's Gospel must be retained, and, therefore, confirms peremptorily our assertion that Jesus Christ Himself founded the Church and invested her from the very beginning with the characteristics of Catholicism. As to that invisible and spiritual Church, the Church based on charisms, and free from every doctrinal and disciplinary authority,—briefly the Protestant Church, we have looked for her in vain in the documents of the end of the first century, the writings of St. Paul, the narratives of the *Acts of the Apostles,* and in the Gospel; we have failed to come upon her, for the simple reason that she exists nowhere in antiquity. That great fact had not failed to attract Newman's attention when he was still an Anglican. He reproduces, in the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* [1] the thoughts he had already expressed on the subject in the *Church of the Fathers.* His forcible and characteristic words may serve as a fitting conclusion to this series of essays : " So much

[1] Edition 1878, p. 8-9.

must the Protestant grant ", he writes, " that, if such a system of doctrine as he would now introduce ever existed in early times, it has been clean swept away as if by a deluge, suddenly, silently, and without memorial; by a deluge coming up in a night, and utterly soaking, rotting, heaving up, and hurrying off every vestige of what it found in the Church, before cock-crowing : so that ' when they rose in the morning ' her true seed ' were all dead corpses "—Nay dead and buried—and without gravestone. ' The waters went over them; there was not one of them left; they sunk like lead in the mighty waters '. Strange antitype, indeed, to the early fortunes of Israel !—then the enemy was drowned and ' Israel saw them dead upon the seashore '. But now, it would seem, water proceeded as a flood ' out of the serpent's mouth ', and covered all the witnesses, so that not even ' their dead bodies lay in the streets of the great city '. Let him take which of his doctrines he will, his peculiar view of self-righteousness... his notion of faith, or of spirituality in religious worship; his denial of the virtue of the sacraments, or of the ministerial commission, or of the visible Church ; or his doctrine of the divine efficacy of the Scriptures as the one appointed instrument of religious teaching; and let him consider how far Antiquity, as it has come down to us, will countenance him in it. No ; he must

allow that the alleged deluge has done its work: yes, and has in turn disappeared itself; it has been swallowed up by the earth, mercilessly as itself was merciless."

PART II

ESSAY ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE IN CHRISTIAN ANTIQUITY

CHAPTER I

Did the Christians of the first ages of the Church receive the sacrament of Penance?

I

The objection and the method to follow in order to refute it.

Among the practices of the Church, that of Penance and Confession is both onerous and beneficent; no wonder, then, that her enemies have attacked it in a very special way. Lascivious novelists—whose main preoccupation is of course... to promote chastity—have denounced that institution as an abominable school of moral perversion. Opportunist Protestants, exceedingly eager not to disturb in their quietude benumbed consciences, have looked upon it as the

source of unbearable anxieties, that must be done away with. These two kinds of objections are concerned mainly with experience, and to answer them is rather the business of the moralist than that of the theologian. But there is another difficulty to answer now—an historical difficulty—which has been raised by rationalistic critics against Confession and which it is my purpose to examine in this paper. Briefly, these critics claim that the sacrament of Penance, in other words, Confession, is not at all an institution formally established by Christ and known to the early Christians, but a comparatively late practice of which there is no trace before the sixth or seventh century, and which received its definite organization in the twelfth or thirteenth century from the great Scholastics and especially St. Thomas Aquinas.

An American bookseller, Charles Lea, has given the fullest exposition of that theory. In the three volumes of his *History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church,* published in Philadelphia in the year 1896, he endeavors to show that the penance referred to by the Fathers and ancient ecclesiastical writers was by no means our sacramental Penance; that the Church did not intend, through that religious rite, to cleanse the soul before God from the stain of sin, but merely to restore the culprit to his rank in the Christian society from which he

had been excluded on account of his sins; that the confession of one's sins had not for its purpose to obtain inner forgiveness, but only to make a public apology for the scandal that those sins had given to the whole community; in a word, that everything took place *in foro externo* and was essentially of a public and disciplinary character and did not reach the soul nor the conscience. The culprit settled his accounts with God directly without any intermediary. It is only later on, when there grew what Lea calls " priestcraft ", that the clergy thought of ascribing to themselves the power to forgive sins and thus open or close the gates of heaven. Auricular confession was established then; and a new sacrament made its appearance, that claimed to cleanse the soul and reconcile sinners with God. But once more this is not a primitive, a Gospel institution, but a late growth, the outcome of priestcraft usurpation.

This is Lea's *thesis*. Harnack, whose knowledge of the documents and history of Christian antiquity is far more extensive than that of the American " historian ", does not expose the subject in the same way. According to the Berlin professor, the Church remitted to the sinner only venial faults, i. e., the faults committed against the Christian society, but not the faults committed against God. The power to forgive the sins committed against God, was

looked upon as a charism, an exceptional power granted only to a few privileged individuals, not as an ordinary power regularly entrusted to the Church hierarchy. All in all, Harnack and Lea come to the same conclusion : viz., the power that priests claimed of remitting sins in Penance is a usurped power : at the beginning Penance had no such sacramental character. This is the thesis that is found—more or less developed and bolstered up—in all the works of Protestant dogmatics and polemics : the same thesis is laid down in an article written by André Lagarde and published in the *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature religieuses,* for the year 1912, under the title : " Was Pope St. Gregory acquainted with Confession? "; the article to which we refer gives a fair summary of the strongest objections that the upholders of free examen and free thought have ever raised from an historical standpoint against our sacrament of Penance.

This is also the thesis which I intend to discuss in this first chapter, in the light of facts and documents.

First of all, we had better lay down the precise subject of the dispute.

The sacrament of Penance implies on the part of the penitent, three principal acts : *contrition, confession, and satisfaction* or penance to perform: and, on the part of the confessor who administers the sacrament, one act, *absolution.*

As regards contrition and satisfaction, Catholics and their opponents agree, inasmuch as they are the fundamental acts of the virtue of penance, and the requisite conditions for any sort of purification of the soul, even without the sacrament, the regret of the sin committed and the will to atone for it have always been looked upon in the Church as necessary for the reconciliation of culprits. That much is granted. But it is on the subject of *confession* and *absolution* that the agreement ceases. As to *confession,* as has been said, non-Catholic critics deny that, at the beginning, it was required for the forgiveness of sins, and required as a spontaneous and usually private avowal that penitents must make, and as an avowal, the purpose of which was to enable the bishop to know exactly the state of the culprit's conscience and determine the expiation he must go through. As to *absolution,* the same critics claim that it was not given in virtue of a power conferred by Christ upon His Church, nor had it the effect of washing away the sin itself and of reconciling the sinner with God.

In the face of these negations, we must lay down the documents of early Christianity and see whether or not there is an agreement between the two. In this study, I shall leave aside, for the time being, the various forms, solemn or private, assumed by penance : of these I shall treat in the second chapter. On the other hand,

in order to avoid both too many divisions of the subject and too many repetitions, I shall not prove successively all the truths denied by our opponents; but I shall make use of the regressive method and, beginning with the early middle ages, go back through the course of centuries and note down the most important testimonies that bear on the *ensemble* of the disputed questions. A few words will suffice afterwards to bring out the proper conclusions.

II.

Testimonies of the Latin Church from the 8th up to the 5th century.

Taking the end of the eighth century for our starting point, we may consult the second capitulary of Theodulphus, bishop of Orleans, to his clergy. Theodulphus was a friend of Charlemagne, and one of the episcopal luminaries of the age. He describes the usual rite of penance as follows. The penitent kneels before God with the priest to whom he is about to confess. Then, he accuses "quidquid a iuventute recordari potest ex omnibus modis quæ gessit", not only the evil deeds, but also the evil words and thoughts of which he is guilty. If his memory is defective, or if shame holds him back,

the priest questions him. This interrogation, as well as the penitent's examination, bears mainly on the seven capital sins, the source of which is pride. Theodulphus observes that this interrogation must be discreet, and that there are many sins mentioned in the penitentials, to which it would be useless, nay, dangerous, to draw the penitent's attention. Once the accusation is over, the penitent must promise to give up and expiate his past sins. Then, the confessor imposes upon him a penance in proportion to his sins and to their circumstances, recites the seven penitential psalms and the prayers of the sacramentary, and absolves him immediately [1].

If we leave out of that description the lengthy prayers recited by the confessor before absolving the penitent, we find there in not only the substance, but the external features and the rite of the sacrament of Penance of to-day. It was thus then, that people confessed in France at the end of the eighth century. Besides the testimony of Theodulphus, we must also quote for that period that of Alcuin, who proves in his CXIIth letter the obligation to confess oneself to the priest as well as to God, and composes for the children of St. Martin's school at Tours, his brief instruction on confession; we have also

[1] *Pat. lat.*, CV, col. 217-219.

the testimony of the great apostle of the Germany of old, St. Boniface of Mayence, (+ 755), who advises confessors to reconcile penitents immediately after confession, owing to the uncertainty of the times[1]; we have that of St. Chrodegand, bishop of Metz (742-764), who imposes on his clergy the obligation to confess at least twice a year, once at the beginning of Lent, and then between August 15 and November 1[2]; we have the words of the Venerable Bede (+ 735), who, some five hundred years before the age of St. Thomas, comments as follows upon the words of the Gospel in which Jesus confers upon Peter the power to bind and to loose: "The power to bind and to loose, which seems to be given by the Lord to St. Peter alone, was certainly given also to all the other Apostles... nay, that ministry was entrusted to the whole Church, in the persons of bishops and priests. After examining (through confession) the sinners' case, she mercifully delivers from the fear of eternal death (through absolution) those whom she deems humble and truly contrite; as to those she sees persevering in their sins, she declares that they are still amenable to the eternal punishment.[3]"

[1] *Statuta*, xxx.
[2] *Regula canonicorum*, xiv.
[3] *Homilia*, ii, 16.

There is no doubt, then, that the Christians of the eighth century were acquainted with the sacramental Penance of to-day. We may go back a century further and consult the writings of a bishop whose testimony is the more valuable as, far from being an original thinker, he is above all a man of tradition and a first-class scholar: —St. Isidore of Seville (+ 636). He devotes to the subject of Penance especially two passages of his works, one in his *Etymologies* (VI, 19, 71-79), the other, in his *Ecclesiastical Offices* (II, 17). The Saint tells us that there are two kinds of penance: one absolutely secret and which has God alone for its witness; the other, official, which is made before the priest. What does the latter imply? Four acts. First, a *fructuosa confessio,* an avowal that must be fecund, since it is intended to restore life; secondly, sorrow; thirdly, a reparation of the faults that have been accused; and lastly, absolution which is not a mere reconciliation with the Church; it is a *mundatio*, an inner cleansing of the soul, that is wrought through the priest's or bishop's ministry, and may extend to all the sins, however grave and numerous they may be. There are no limits to the divine mercy, provided there be none to repentance.

From St. Isidore we may go back some fifty years earlier; and since, in the subject now before us, St. Gregory's authority has been recently invoked against our belief, we may

dwell some what on the teaching of that great Pope.

The passages where St. Gregory speaks of penance in general are indeed many; we may take up presently only those that deal with the sinner's confession and his absolution by the Church. The most remarkable of these texts is his XXVIth homily (4-6) on the Gospels.

The Pope is commenting upon the *Quorum remiseritis peccata :* Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. The Apostles received, then, he says, the Holy Ghost that they might free their fellow-men from the bonds of sin. God gave them a share in His right to judge; they judge in His name and stead : *vice Dei*. Now bishops are the successors of the Apostles : they possess, then, the same right. St. Gregory reaffirms in these words the principle on which the whole penitential discipline is based,—the power conferred upon the Church authorities to bind and loose sinners. But it is important for us to notice that he does not speak of a mere reconciliation of the sinner with the Church, of a mere external ceremony that did not reach the soul. The Apostles, and bishops after them, share in the divine power to judge : *principatum superni iudicii sortiuntur;* they retain or remit sins in God's stead, *vice Dei;* they condemn or free their fellow-men, *alios damnant*

vel liberant; or, as he says elsewhere [1], they wash sins away, *delent culpas.* Unquestionably, the Pope means here to designate an effective and inner power, and not merely some procedure of ecclesiastical police.

Now, St. Gregory continues, the bishop must justly exercise this power as regards sinners; and that he may do so, first he must know the sins they have committed and the penance they have done for them: *Videndum est quæ culpa præcessit aut quæ pœnitentia sit secuta.* That exact knowledge of the sins cannot be obtained but through confession, and this is why confession is proved to be a consequence of the judiciary character of the sentence that the bishop has to pronounce. If he is called upon to judge, he must do so with due knowledge of the case, and, in most cases, that knowledge can be supplied only by the penitent's own confession.

This is certainly St. Gregory's meaning; hence, he demands that the penitent should make that avowal with his own lips, *ore proprio,* and spontaneously, *sponte* [2]; hence, too, he looks upon that avowal, when it is accompanied with humility and repentance, as the beginning of the sinner's spiritual resurrection. The sinner who confesses, is like Lazarus, coming out of the

[1] *In Ezechiel, lib.* III, homil. IX, 20.
[2] *Moral.,* XXII, 31.

grave, still bound indeed with winding bands, but now living: like Lazarus, the sinner comes out of the darkness where he kept his sins concealed, and appears in the full light of the day with his bonds. These bonds, it is the business of the ministers of the Church to break asunder. The confession will be followed by the absolution: the sins confessed will be remitted. A dreadful ministry for those who exercise it, the homilist continues, for they are responsible for the forgiveness they may wrongly grant or refuse: dreadful too for those on whose behalf it is exercised, for they are at times responsible for those mistakes. Let both—the confessor and the penitent—walk in fear before God and do their best to treat with utmost respect the great gift of His indulgence.

This is, in a few words, the whole substance of St. Gregory's penitential teaching, and it is as clear as day, I think, that we find therein all the essential elements of our sacrament of Penance: confession, contrition, satisfaction, and absolution. But we may consult a still more ancient testimony—that of St. Cæsarius of Arles,—who was born about the year 470, and died in the year 542.

St. Cæsarius is the type of those Gallo-Roman bishops who, with unfaltering patience, set themselves to the task of preserving in the midst of the barbaric invasions whatever remained of

Roman civilization, and devoted themselves, body and soul, to that portion of the Christian world which had been entrusted to their care. His sermons, most of which are still extant, are fine specimens of that familiar and popular preaching which, in order to be better understood, sets aside far-fetched formulas and always goes straight to its end. The teaching of the Bishop of Arles on the subject of penance is very plain indeed. He distinguishes, at the outset, two kinds of sins that the faithful may commit: light sins that can be atoned for and washed away by good works, and grievous sins for which penance must absolutely be done. That penance may be performed either publicly or privately and secretly; but in whatever form it takes place, it always implies a confession of the sins committed. In his CCLIIId sermon [1], St. Cæsarius lays down the law in this regard as follows: "The will of God is that we should confess our sins, not only to Him but to men; and as it is certain we have some wounds due to sin, we ought to have recourse to the remedy of confession".[1] "The hour will come", he exclaims in his CCLIst sermon, "when the angels of God shall root up the tares that have grown in the field of the husbandman, and bind in bundles thieves and adulterers, and misers,

[1] *Patr. lat.*, vol. xxxix.

and false witnesses, and slanderers, and cast them into the fire. If we feel guilty of such crimes, let us avoid the everlasting punishment by making a sincere confession, that springs from a truthful heart, *puro corde*, and by performing the penance that priests may impose on us". These words are very plain. At the beginning of the sixth century, confession is looked upon in Southern Gaul as a condition for divine forgiveness and the exercise of the power of loosing that is entrusted to the Church. Sacramental Penance as we have it to-day is there already practised.

If we turn to Africa, we find the same discipline some fifty years earlier. A certain bishop of Mauretania Cæsareensis, who lived in the middle of the fifth century, Victor of Cartenna, has left us a treatise still extant "On Penance", concerning whose authorship there was much doubt for many years and which is printed among the works of St. Ambrose[1]. In truth, the whole first part of that treatise on penance is but an exhortation to confession; it develops at length the classical comparison between a sinner and a sick man, which was taken up later by St. Cæsarius. You are a sinner and therefore a wounded man, a sick man; if, then, you wish to be cured, you must first show your wound and tell the

[1] *Patr. lat.*, XVII. 791 and foll.

physician your sickness.—But God, you say, knows my evil condition.—He certainly does; but it is not He personally who will prescribe the proper remedy and cure you. It is the priest, the bishop, who has been commissioned to point out to you the precautions to take, the curative penance to accomplish; and therefore he needs that you should make your faults known to him. The writer then goes on refuting the sinner's objections, raising his doubts, and especially encouraging him in the distress he experiences on account of his frequent relapses: "What do you fear? Of what are you afraid? The same physician will always cure you; you will not change him: his remedy is well known to you..., what has already cured you will cure you again... Whoever does not despise a sick man does not refuse him a helping hand[1]".

Now, we may turn again towards Rome, towards the Rome of the fifth century, and listen to the Pope who perhaps more than any other has shown, together with the love of antiquity and tradition, a deep abhorrence for disciplinary and doctrinal novelty. St. Leo, then, writes as follows: "Both in the rule of faith and in the observance of discipline, let the standard of antiquity be maintained throughout[2]." In fact,

[1] 1, 3, 12, 24.
[2] *Epist.* CXXIX, 2 (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, vol. XII, p. 96.)

many of his letters have for their only purpose, either to recall or to lay down with greater precision, those ancient rules. He thus explains in his CVIIIth letter the general economy of penance : " I will not keep back the Church's rules about the state of penitents. The manifold mercy of God so assists men when they fall, that not only by the grace of baptism but also by the remedy of penance is the hope of eternal life revived, in order that they who have violated the gifts of the second birth, condemning themselves by their own judgment, may attain to remission of their crimes, the provisions of the divine goodness having so ordained that God's indulgence cannot be obtained without the supplication of priests. For the mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus, has transmitted this power to those that are set over the Church that they should both grant a course of penance to those who confess, and, when they are cleansed by wholesome correction, admit them through the door of reconciliation to communion in the sacraments... Hence it behoves each individual Christian to listen to the judgment of his own conscience, lest he put off the turning to God from day to day and fix the time of his amendment at the end of his life. It is most perilous for human frailty and ignorance to confine itself to such conditions as to be reduced to the uncertainty of a few hours, and instead of win-

ning indulgence by fuller amendment, to choose the narrow limits of that time when space is scarcely found for the penitent's confession and the priest's absolution [1]. "

Even though it is almost impossible to do justice in a translation to St. Leo's harmonious and serenely majestic periods, yet the reader may notice in the passage just given first, that the Saint asserts that God has entrusted the Church's ministers with the power to submit sinners to penance and to reconcile them, and —let it be observed—reconcile them not only with themselves, but with God; they secure to themselves the *indulgentia Dei* by means of the ecclesiastical ministry; and even the hope of life everlasting is restored to them through that reconciliation. That grace, the Pope insists, can be procured to the guilty only through the priests' supplications : *ut, indulgentia Dei nisi supplicationibus sacerdotum nequeat obtineri;* nor can we understand by these *priestly supplications* any prayers said by the clergy on behalf of sinners : these words have, in the present case, a very definite meaning. As we shall see later, it is beyond question that, till the 13th century, the formula of absolution was deprecatory : the priests' supplications spoken of by the Pope are precisely the absolution. Without priestly abso-

[1] (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series, vol. XII, p. 79-80.)

lution, there is, then, generally no forgiveness of sins. On the other hand, that absolution supposes a previous confession. The priest absolves, indeed, the penitent who has done penance; but he has imposed that penance upon him after hearing the confession of his sins: *ut et confitentibus actionem pœnitentiæ darent, et eosdem salubri satisfactione purgatos... per ianuam reconciliationis admitterent.* Besides, St. Leo demands with insistence that this confession and reconciliation should not be postponed till the last moment, when effective satisfaction is impossible, and when there is hardly any time for the penitent to declare his sins and for the priest to absolve him.

III

Testimonies of the Latin Church during the Fourth Century.

We may go back still further than St. Leo and consult that part of the fourth century which goes from St. Augustine to St. Athanasius, and was certainly the most brilliant period of the Church's ancient history, on account of the genius and authority of the great Churchmen that made it famous.

First, as regards the West. We are told that, when absolving sinners, the Church did not act in virtue of an ordinary and normal power,—the power of the keys. But here is St. Augustine who both in his ccxcvth sermon, n. 2, and in his *Commentary on St. John* [1], asserts precisely that nothing can be loosed without the Church, for she has received from Jesus Christ in the person of St. Peter, the power of the keys, to retain or remit sins. Then, too, at the beginning of his treatise *On Penance,* St. Ambrose proves that priests can remit sins, not indeed in their own name, but as God's ministers and instruments. Moreover, in his first and second letters to Sympronianus, St. Pacian of Barcelona shows, against the Novatians, that bishops have the right to grant forgiveness to penitents, for they have received the right to bind and to loose. This right is not a privilege granted to them for their personal sanctity; it flows exclusively *ex apostolico jure;* it belongs to them, because they are the successors of the Apostles.

Again, we are told that then the Church did not truly remit sin, and that the pardon she granted was a mere external reconciliation with the Christian community. But, then, the expressions used by the great churchmen we have just quoted, are meaningless. The Novatians allege

[1] *Tractat.* CXXIV, 5.

that God alone can forgive sins and restore supernatural life to the soul. The Fathers in question would have certainly granted this, had they looked upon the priest's absolution as a mere reconciliation with the Church. What do they answer? True, they say, God alone is the first and principal author of the remission of sins and the cleansing of the soul; but God works these wonders through the priest as His minister and organ. "God alone, you say", writes St. Pacian, "can remit sin. Quite correct. But what He does through His priests, is done by His power[1]". And St. Ambrose: "Sins are forgiven through the Holy Spirit. Certainly, but men lend Him their ministry... they forgive sins, not in their own name, but in that of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit[2]."

Furthermore, we are told that then there was no obligatory private and detailed confession. But listen to St. Pacian. The first thing a sinner who wants to get rid of his sins must do, is to accuse them and make known the wounds of his soul: "*Desinite vulneratam tegere conscientiam*[3]."

As was noticed already, St. Gregory compares the penitent who confesses his sins to Lazarus coming forth from the grave; but St. Augustine

[1] *Epist. ad Sympr.*, I, 6; III, 7.
[2] *De Spiritu Sancto*, III, 137. (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d. series, vol. X, p. 154.)
[3] *Libellus exhortatorius ad paenitentiam*, 6-8.

had already used the same comparison in almost the very same words[1]. Furthermore, long before St. Gregory, St. Augustine[2] and St. Jerome[3] had observed that, to determine exactly the penance to impose upon a penitent, the bishop or the priest confessor had to know in detail, through the penitent's confession, the various faults he had committed. Should a still more explicit testimony be required, this is what is said of St. Ambrose by his biographer, Paulinus, who was his contemporary and most likely too his secretary : " Ambrose rejoiced with those who rejoiced, and wept with those who wept. For whenever someone came to him to receive penance and confess his sins, the holy Bishop so wept that he compelled also the sinner to shed tears... As to the sins that were confessed to him, he spoke of them to none but to God with whom he made intercession (on the sinner's behalf), leaving in this to future bishops the good example of acting as intercessors before God rather than as accusers before men[4] ". Surely there is designated in these words the spontaneous and detailed and auricular confession, the secrecy of which cannot be broken. Those words of his biographer illustrate wonderfully

[1] *Sermo* LXVII, 2, 3 ; CCCLII, 8.
[2] *Enchiridion*, LXV ; *De fide et operibus*, 48 ; *Sermo* LXXXII, 11.
[3] *In Matt.*, XVI, 19 ; *In Ecclesiast*, XII, 4.
[4] *Vita sancti Ambrosii*, 39.

the meaning of the prayer which St. Ambrose has precisely embodied on his work on Penance: "Grant first, O Lord, that I may know how with inmost affection, to mourn with those who are in sin... Grant that as often as the sin of anyone who has fallen, is made known to me, I may suffer with him, and not chide him proudly, but mourn and weep with him[1]".

IV

Testimonies of the Greek Church from the Eighth up to the Fourth Century.

This, then, is the way in which during the fourth and subsequent centuries the churches of the West understood the penitential discipline and practised the sacrament of Penance. But did the belief and practice of the East on this topic agree with the belief and practice of the West? Very strangely, indeed, during the 10th and 11th centuries, we see some writers who belong to the period of the Byzantine decadence, maintain that the power to forgive sins is a privilege granted by God to the sanctity of an *élite*, rather than the property of the official hierarchy. According to that principle, some lay monks,

[1] *De paenitentia*, II, 73.

under the pretext that their lives were better than those of secular priests, take upon themselves the ministry of confession and strive to exclude parish priests therefrom. But these pretensions, far from being looked upon as sanctioned by the primitive economy of penance, were deemed an abuse that was to be done away with, inasmuch as it was absolutely contrary to ancient tradition. Anastasius Sinaita [1], Theodoret [2], St. Isidore of Pelusium [3], St. Cyril of Alexandria [4], St. Chrysostom [5], St. Basil [6], and among the Syriac Fathers, the monk Aphraates [7], and St. Ephrem [8], all teach that bishops and priests remit sins in virtue of the power that has been conferred by God upon them—the power of the keys. Notice, remission of sins is surely meant. In truth, Anastasius observes, God indeed, as the main cause, washes away sin; but He does not do this immediately by Himself; He does it through priests, as His co-workers (συνεργοί); likewise, St. John Chrysostom dwells again and again on the fact that priests have the power to remit sins; not—he says more than once—merely to declare that sins are remitted by

[1] *Quaestiones*, Qu. VI.
[2] *Quaestiones in Levitic.*, interrog. 15.
[3] *Epist.* I, 338.
[4] *In Lucam*, V, 24; VII, 28.
[5] *De sacerdotio*, III, 6.
[6] *Regulae brev. tractatae*, interr. 288.
[7] *Demonstratio*, VII, 11.
[8] *Opera*, II, p. 440.

God, but to remit them themselves. No more explicit statement, I think, could be desired.

And on what conditions are sins thus remitted by the priests? Of course, contrition, as well as the will to satisfy, is one of these conditions; but also confession. In the year 1905, Professor Conybeare edited a ritual of penance, ascribed to John Mandakuni, a patriarch of the Greek-speaking territory of Greater Armenia, about the end of the fifth century. One of the rulings reads as follows: "The priest sits down and after making the penitent kneel down, asks his confession. Then, he mentions the names of the various faults, and then the person who confesses must answer yes, if he has committed them, and no, if he is not guilty thereof." Lastly, the priest recites a few prayers and absolves the penitent[1].

Almost the same ceremonial is also found among the Syrians. A very precious testimony to this effect is found in the words of the monk Aphraates, whose letters or *Demonstrations* date back to the years 337-345. When addressing sinners, Aphraates entreats them to lay aside bashfulness and confess their sins to the physicians of souls, for they cannot be cured, unless they make that confession. On the other hand, addressing also the spiritual physicians,

[1] *Rituale Armenorum*, Oxford, 1905, p. 294.

those physicians " who hold the keys of the gates of heaven, and open those gates to penitents ", Aphraates begs them to keep under secrecy the avowals that are made to them, and never to refuse forgiveness to those who ask for it with sincerity[1].

So much for the Syrians, and we may reasonably believe that the Greeks, from whom both Armenians and Syrians held their practices and faith, had the same discipline. " Without confession ", writes St. John Climacus, " no one can obtain the forgiveness of his sins "[2]; and he goes on enumerating the qualities of that confession, which even exteriorly must be sincere, humble and sorrowful. The Saint supposes that that confession was secret as a rule and had both secret and public faults for its object. We learn this also from St. Isidore of Pelusium[3] in the fifth century, St. Basil[4] and St. Chrysostom[5], in the fourth. Besides, the mention of the latter's name recalls precisely a fact that is very important for the history of Penance at Constantinople, and confirms what has just been said. The historian Socrates relates that, in connection with the Novatian schism, about the

[1] *Demonstr.* VIII, 3 and foll.
[2] *Scala paradisi*, grad. IV.
[3] *Epist.* V, 261.
[4] *Epist.* CXIX, 34.
[5] *In Genesim*, homil. XXX, 5; cf. SOCRATES, *Hist. eccles.*, VI, 21.

year 250, the bishops of Thrace had decided that henceforth there should be in every church a priest penitentiary, who was to replace the bishop; i. e., a priest who was entrusted with the duty to hear the penitents' confessions and see that they performed the penance that was imposed on them. That institution was suppressed about the year 391 by the patriarch Nectarius, in consequence of a scandal due to the indiscretion of the penitentiary of Constantinople. Nay, it seems that Nectarius went further and, at least for a while, allowed the faithful to approach the Eucharist without confessing. That step of the Patriarch, Socrates remarks, was altogether excessive, and it was really to apply to an accidental and very uncommon abuse, a remedy worse than the evil[1]. This, then, was the state of things when St. Chrysostom replaced Nectarius in the see of Constantinople. He did not reverse abruptly the decision of his predecessor; but he devoted the very best of his efforts and of his eloquence to the task of palliating its disastrous results and bringing back gradually the faithful to the regular practice of confession. This shows conclusively that penance, as conceived then by the Greek Church, implied that practice and included substantially

[1] *Hist. eccl.*, v, 19. On the whole occurrence, cf. P. Batiffol, *Etudes d'histoire et de théologie positive*, series 1, p. 149 and foll.: and also Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, vol. II. p. 186.

the same elements as the sacramental Penance of to-day.

V

Greek and Latin Testimonies of the first three Centuries. — The Gospel

Now, we have reached the beginning of the third century, the very times which, according to our opponents, testify against us. Some two or three hundred years ago, Protestants could still proclaim that the Christianity of to-day, at least as conceived by the Catholic Church, was very unlike the Christianity of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. Nowadays, those critics whose scholarship is really up to date, are careful enough not to make that assertion. They take refuge as it were in the first three centuries as in a rather obscure and more or less confused period, where they think there are no traces whatever of our belief. However, we too may take up the study of that same period; and perhaps our investigations will throw on the subject on which we are now engaged, more light than our opponents imagine.

The first half of the third century is filled with Origen's literary activity. In his numerous

works, he takes up several times the subject of penance and the way it must be performed. For instance, he comments upon Ps. XXXVIII, 8, *Quoniam iniquitatem meam pronuntio,* as follows : " I have already said many a time that by that avowal of wickedness, the confession of sin is meant. See then what is taught us by the divine Scripture, viz., that we must not hide our sins within ourselves "; and then, he gives the classical comparison : you have taken an indigestible food, your stomach is loaded with an excess of humor; you shall suffer therefrom as long as you do not get rid of it. " In the same way, those who have sinned and who hide and retain their sins within themselves become sick and, as it were, are smothered on that account. " Let them, then, accuse themselves and go to confession and get rid of their iniquity, and the whole source of evil will be expelled by the very fact. " However ", the great Doctor continues, " consider attentively to whom you must confess your guilt; try first the physician to whom you will manifest the cause of your sickness : [choose one] who knows how to be weak with the weak and weep with those who weep, and who knows when he must sympathize with you and share your sorrow... And then, if he gives you an advice, comply with it, abide by it; if he thinks and decides that your sickness is of such a nature as to demand to be made known and

attended to in presence of the whole church—a step that will edify your brethren and restore you more easily to health—do not hesitate to do so after mature deliberation and on the advice of that skilful physician." These words are very plain. Evidently Origen means to designate here a confession, nay a secret confession of secret sins to a spiritual physician. Who is that physician? Origen does not say explicitly, though from the fact that the penitent must perform his penance in presence of the Church, it is safe to infer that the confessor is a churchman. But what follows is still more explicit. In his second homily on *Leviticus*, n. 4, Origen mentions the various means by which Christians obtain the forgiveness of sins; and of the seventh means—penance—he speaks as follows: "a laborious process indeed when the sinner washes his bed with his tears and makes his tears his bread for day and night, and is not afraid to confess to the Lord's priest his sin and beg remedy for it, according to what is written: *I myself shall declare my iniquity to the Lord, and thou shalt remit the wickedness of my heart.*" For, as he remarks elsewhere [1], it is to the priests of the Church that, after the pattern of Him who instituted the priesthood, it belongs to receive the sins of the multitude and to grant to that multitude

[1] *In Levitic.*, homil. v, 3.

the pardon of their sins. "The layman who falls into sin, cannot by himself wash away his fault; he must have recourse to the levite, he needs the priest; nay, at times, he applies to one greater than they: he needs even the pontiff's help, that he may obtain the remission of his sins.[1]"

Origen's testimony is most valuable both for Egypt and for Palestine, for he taught successively in these two countries. In passing from Origen to St. Cyprian, we do not leave the soil of Africa, since with the latter we are at Carthage; but we go back to the Latin Church which we had left for a while. The reader is acquainted with the circumstances that led St. Cyprian to deal especially with penance. The persecution of Decius in the year 250 had caused in Africa a great many lamentable defections. Frightened by the threat of torture, many Christians either had actually apostatized and sacrificed to idols—these were the *sacrificati*,—or had obtained for a sum of money from some obliging government official a certificate to the effect that they had sacrificed—which was not the case,—these were the *libellatici;* both,—*sacrificati* and *libellatici*—, were called *lapsi*, fallen away Christians. However, in the year 251, soon after the storm was over, these weak Christians asked to be recon-

[1] *In Numeros*, homil. x, 1.

ciled and received again into the Church. St. Cyprian did not at all turn down absolutely their request; but with the approval of the Council of the bishops of his province and with that of the Roman clergy whom he had consulted in writing, he demanded that, before being absolved, those among the *lapsi* who were not at the point of death, should perform a penance in proportion to the gravity of their fault; and for the *sacrificati*, that penance was to last their whole life-time. The culprits found that decision altogether too severe; so they started a schism, placed at their head a priest of the name of Novatus and later, falling back into excessive rigorism, founded an independent Church. This is the Novatian party of which I have already spoken and which subsisted for many years in opposition to the orthodox Church.

St. Cyprian, then, requires that the *lapsi* should do penance: "What!", he exclaims, "whilst for smaller sins sinners do penance for a set time and according to the rules of discipline come to public confession, and by imposition of the hand of the bishop and clergy receive the right of communion: now, with their time still unfulfilled: while persecution is still raging, while the peace of the Church itself is not yet restored, they are admitted to communion, and their name is presented; and while the penance is not yet performed, the exomologesis not yet made, the

hands of the bishop and clergy not yet laid upon them, the eucharist is given to them, although it is written : *Whosoever shall eat the bread or drink thē cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* [1] "

St. Cyprian is indignant at such a violation of the laws of the Church : he demands that the *lapsi* should first do penance, i. e., go through the exomologesis—that complete process which includes both the accusation of one's faults and their expiation—and then obtain forgiveness from the bishop and the clergy. The mind of the Bishop of Carthage on this point is very plain. In his treatise *De lapsis,* he takes up the same subject. Some Christians had been thinking of apostatizing, though, as a matter of fact, they had not apostatized. This was a merely interior sin. What is St. Cyprian's decision ? " Although those Christians ", he says, " are bound by no crime of sacrifice to idols or of certificate, yet, since they have even thought of such things, let them confess with grief and simplicity this very thing to God's priests, and make the exomologesis of their consciences, and put off from them the load of their minds "; and again : " I entreat you, brethren, that each one should confess his own sin, while he who has sinned is still in this world, while his confession may be

[1] *Epist.* xvi. 2 (Cf. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. V. p. 290).

received, while his satisfaction and the absolution given by the priest are still pleasing to the Lord[1]."

Through the writings of St. Cyprian, as well as in those of Origen, we thus find, in the middle of the third century, the essential elements of our sacrament of Penance. If we go back some thirty or forty years earlier, we still find these elements. There appears at Rome a decree of Pope Callixtus, which provokes Tertullian's wrath. Looking upon the severity with which sinners guilty of unchastity are treated, as excessive, and in order to save those sinners from a state of despair, the Pope has mitigated the former discipline. Henceforth, they can obtain the forgiveness of their sins after doing proper penance. And why does the Pope take that step and grant that forgiveness? Of course, in order to prove its opportunity, he quotes some instances taken from Holy Writ; but in order to prove its authoritative value, he appeals solely to the words said to Peter and his successors: "Upon this rock I will build my Church; I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." We learn all those details from

[1] *De lapsis*, 28, 29 (Cf. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. V, p. 445.

Tertullian himself, who after becoming a Montanist, and pushing rigorism to the excess, questions the Pope's right and power. Callixtus remits their sins to fornicators, and he does so in virtue of the power of the keys [1]. Besides, we may observe that, according to Tertullian, bishops have indeed the power to forgive some sins, but not the power to forgive especially those more grievous faults which God alone can remit. The description of the penitential exercises, that he gives in his two treatises *De paenitentia* and *De pudicitia,* is exactly that presented by St. Cyprian. The culprit must first confess his sins to the bishop or to his delegate. The confession enables the confessor to determine the satisfaction, the penance, that the sinner must perform : *quatenus satisfactio confessione disponitur :* then, after the penance is accomplished, the bishops grants the pardon : *veniam ab episcopo consequi poterit* [2]. This is in substance the sacrament of Penance as we have it now.

Tertullian's testimony belongs to the last years of the second century and to the early part of the third. St. Irenaeus' testimony belongs exclusively to the second century. In his great treatise *Against Heresies,* written about the year 190, the Bishop of Lyons made it his chief concern to

[1] *De pudicitia,* 1, 18, 21.
[2] *De paenitentia,* 9; *De pudicitia,* 18.

describe some forms of Gnosticism during the second century and to oppose to it the authority of tradition and of the Church. However, he came once upon the opportunity to say a few words on the subject of penance. Some women have allowed themselves to be seduced by the Gnostic Marcus and his disciples, and through that frequentation have lost both their faith and their virtue. Their fellow-Christians, however, do not abandon them and succeed in bringing several of them to repentance. What is the conduct of these penitent women? They condemn themselves, says St. Irenaeus, to the public exomologesis, which means, as explained later on by Tertullian, that they confess their faults and accept the penance which they perform in public. But others, guilty of the same sins, have not the same courage. Their sins, of course, are secret, and they are afraid at the thought that their satisfaction will make them too conspicuous; they despair of the life of God and either depart altogether from the Christian community, or, whilst staying in the Church, "hesitate between the two courses"[1]. Irenaeus does not speak of pardon being granted to the former category of these women; however, from what he says, it is safe to assert that that pardon was granted to them at least at the time of death.

[1] *Adv. haeres.*, I, 13, 5, 7.

Their penance lasted indeed their whole lifetime; but they died reconciled to God and to the Church.

Of all writers St. Irenaeus is the oldest that has left us precise details as regards the exercises of sacramental Penance. This does not mean, of course, that the writers who preceded him have no word to say on penance in general. Thus, for instance, the brother of Pope Pius I, Hermas, has left us a writing, *The Shepherd,* still extant in its entirety, and composed between the years 136 and 145, the object of which is to show the necessity and efficacy of penance. But in that book which is full of visions and symbols, Hermas has treated but obscurely the function of the Church in the penitents' reconciliation. Other documents that are still older, like the letter of Pseudo-Barnabas, and the *Teaching of the twelve Apostles* (*Didachè*), mention a confession of sins that must be made in the Church[1]. Unfortunately we can hardly make use of those texts, for they are too short and not sufficiently explicit. Should we wonder at that comparative silence? No indeed: for, following in the footsteps of the historian Eusebius of Cæsarea, who of all the Church writers of the fourth century, was the best acquainted with ancient ecclesiastical literature, we may observe that, before St. Irenaeus,

[1] Pseudo-Barnabas, xix, 12; *Didachè*, iv, 14; xiv, 1.

few Christians set themselves to the task of writing, and the few writings that have come down to us from those remote ages, consist chiefly of some occasional letters that have a very precise and definite purpose.

Furthermore, it hardly becomes a critic to think that that long chain of tradition, of which I have just unfolded the various links, is in no way connected with the Gospel, and that that sacramental discipline, the practice of which we have witnessed, does not go back to Jesus Himself. I have just mentioned St. Irenaeus. All know that he had been the disciple of St. Polycarp, and St. Polycarp, that of St. John. The distance between St. Irenæus and St. John is very short indeed, and the bond that joins them very strong. So, if we open the Gospel that St. John wrote less than a century before the work of Irenæus, what do we read? After His resurrection, Jesus passes through the door of the room where the Apostles are gathered and salutes them : *Peace be to you!* They are glad to see Him. Then, He continues : *As my Father hath sent Me, I also send you;* and, after breathing upon them, He says : *Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained* (XX, 21-23).

These words recorded by St. John were preceded by others of a similar significance : the

power to retain and forgive sins had been already promised to Peter and the other Apostles in a more general formula preserved by St. Matthew, and which is given only with more precision in St. John's Gospel : *" I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven... Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven "* (XVI, 19 ; XVIII, 18). True, some non-Catholic critics have seen in these texts a direct allusion to the power to baptize, i. e., to remit sins through baptism. But, in Loisy's words [1], they grant that " it must be said that the Apostolic authority is not thereby exhausted ; and that, if the Church can refuse baptism to the unworthy, as well as grant it to those who are well disposed, she continues to have over the baptized, as regards sin, a power that is shown also in two ways, in a positive and in a negative way by the grant or refusal of absolution, according to the need and the opportunity. These texts show that, from the very beginning, the Christian community claimed such a power and looked upon it as well as upon the commission to preach the Gospel, as the risen Savior's inheritance ". It is, then, in virtue of the power given them by Jesus, in the strength of His spirit imparted to them and by His authority,

[1] *Autour d'un petit livre*, p. 249.

that the Apostles and their successors are called upon to bind and to loose, to remit or retain sins. To remit or to retain! They are then, judges and not, as it were, unconscious and irresponsible dispensers of absolution, before whom one has to come and express some vague sign of repentance. They shall judge and decide whether or not pardon must be granted or sins retained; and how can they pass that judgment, unless they know the penitent's sins and dispositions? And how can they, in most cases, obtain that knowledge but through his own declaration, his own confession! The judiciary character of the sentence implies inquiry into the case, and inquiry into the case implies the knowledge of the misdeed and, in the present instance, the culprit's own declaration. As we have seen, this is precisely the view of Christian antiquity, and particularly of St. Gregory; and this is why we have in those words of the Savior, the foundation of all the power that the Church has ever claimed, and the principle of all the development that she has since given to her penitential discipline. The sacrament of Penance is no invention of the middle ages, or even of Christian antiquity: it is an institution of Jesus Himself.

VI

A last Objection. Conclusion of this Chapter.

We might close here our study; but before doing so, it may not be useless to dispose, at least in a few words, of an objection that is often raised against our belief. Had sacramental Penance been known from the beginning, why is it, we are asked, that, after all, confession is mentioned so seldom? Why is it that the Fathers of the Church ascribe so often to penance in general and particularly to the expiation of sin the power to wash it away, without even mentioning the sacrament of Penance and confession which is now a part of it?

As we have seen, the facts that are brought against us are true only in part: confession and absolution are indeed mentioned far more often than is claimed by Liberal critics. On the other hand, it is quite correct that we find in the ancient Church literature many exhortations to repentance and penance, accompanied with the assurance of forgiveness, without an express mention of the priest's intervention and the penitent's confession. Did this take place now, we would wonder; but that it took place then, we ought not to wonder. It is certain that till

the fifth and sixth centuries, and even later, the sacrament of Penance was received but seldom, far more seldom than in our days; and particularly before the eighth century we find no ecclesiastical law obliging the faithful to receive it at stated time, once a year for instance. In this regard, it seems to have been left to the conscience of every individual Christian to determine the frequency of his making use of Penance. Furthermore, the Church teaches that perfect penance, or to use present day theological terminology, perfect contrition washes sins away, even outside the sacrament, provided, of course, one intends to receive it when he is obliged to do so. Hence, till sinners were willing to have recourse to the priest's ministry, what could preachers and moralists do but exhort them to conceive deep sorrow for their sins and make for them as perfect a penance as possible, in order that those faults might be the sooner washed away and forgiven? They set themselves to this task, and this accounts for the tenor and incompleteness of their writings.—To this first answer we may add another that will complete it. Among the three parts of sacramental Penance—confession, satisfaction and absolution—the Christians of to-day emphasize confession to such an extent that the whole sacrament is often called the sacrament of confession from what is not at all its most essential part. For-

merly this was not the case, and a mere reading of the writers of whom we are speaking, suffices to show that they paid very particular attention to satisfaction, i. e., penance strictly so called, inasmuch as it was by far the longest and most painful part, and they expected the guilty to do likewise. Consequently, we must not wonder at the fact that they concentrated on this point all their efforts and that what is the *main* topic of their exhortations seems at times to be the *only* topic; but, even when they insist only on this aspect, they do not intend to exclude the others; and from their language in other places and from the language of their contemporaries, we can readily infer that they did not ignore, nor intended that others should ignore that on which they remained silent.

We may now sum up and conclude this first chapter. Jesus Christ gave to His Church the power to cleanse consciences; to retain and forgive sins, to bind and loose. That power must be exercised in the form of a judgment; there is in the Church, in the true sense of the word, a *tribunal* of penance. As a matter of fact, from the very beginning, in virtue of that authority and resting on the words of the Master, the Church forgave sins, and reconciled sinners with God, after requiring that they should previously confess their sins and submitting them previously to some expiation. Con-

fession, satisfaction, on the sinner's part, absolution by the priest or the bishop : these are the essential elements of our sacrament of Penance; and to assert that that sacrament is but a creation of men seems to be both repugnant to reason and unhistorical.

CHAPTER II

How was the sacrament of Penance practised during the first ages of the Church?

We have shown in the previous chapter that from the very beginning there existed in the Church a penitential discipline that comprised three principal acts, confession, satisfaction, and absolution. In order to make our demonstration more simple and intelligible, we have left aside the merely external and accessory forms and modalities which the administration of Penance assumed in those remote ages. My purpose is now to take up again that same subject and show how, during the first centuries, Christians went to confession; how they practised sacramental Penance.

Although this present chapter is more descriptive and historical in tone than polemical, yet it has unquestionably a real apologetical value. For most of the objections raised against our Catholic beliefs come from the fact that these beliefs are completely misunderstood or known very imperfectly. The primitive penitential discipline especially has been seriously misunderstood and, therefore, unsatisfactorily des-

cribed, the more so that its history is rather difficult to trace. Even after the studies of Morin and Petau during the 17th century, and—to mention only the works of French scholars—of Monsignor Batiffol and of Frs. Vacandard and d'Alès in our own time, we are far from knowing that history in all its details; and, even as regards the details that we *do* know, our knowledge is not always as precise nor as thorough as it might be. The following exposition is, then, incomplete, and we shall have to leave several interesting questions unanswered. But at least the main outlines will be presented; and, whilst our curiosity may not be altogether satisfied, we will see how difficulties raised against our faith vanish away in the light of history.

I

Confession. Its form, subject-matter and minister

At the outset, we must recall a distinction that is of the greatest importance in the present subject, the distinction between *public* and *plenary* penance and *private* penance. That these two forms of penance were known to Christian antiquity, is certain, as we shall see later. But

just now it may be asked in what did *public* penance, in what did *private* penance consist? In what did those two kinds of penance differ? If we open the books written on this subject some fifty years ago, we find in many of them this answer : public penance is that of which the exercises were performed in public : public confession made in a loud voice; public satisfaction performed in presence of the assembly of all the faithful; and public absolution solemnly pronounced by the bishop; in private penance, on the contrary, as by our present custom, everything took place in secrecy and away from the eyes of the faithful : confession, satisfaction and absolution had no other witnesses than the penitent, the confessor and God.

Now, this is not at all a correct view of the actual case. What distinguished private penance from public penance was not that all exercises of one were secret and all the exercises of the other public, since, in both, as a matter of fact, the confession was secret and the absolution, at least for a long while, public, except in danger of death. The distinction between the two came from the fact that, in private penance, the *satisfaction,* the expiation of sin, the *penance* imposed by the confessor was performed in secrecy, whereas in public penance, a part of that satisfaction was accomplished before the whole Christian community and according to a

definite form. Hence, *public penance* is not at all the same as *public confession.* To do public penance was indeed to place oneself publicly and according to a determined ceremonial in the state of penance; it was to submit oneself to some humiliating practices imposed by the Church; but it was not to confess oneself publicly. Public sacramental confession is one of those myths that have no room in history. When by chance we come upon it, it presents itself as an unimportant exception, or a solitary abuse condemned by the Church.

Owing to the importance of the subject we take the liberty to add a few more words. Some four years ago, the Rev. Bertrand Kurtscheid, O. F. M., published a book [1] in which he goes over and discusses once more the texts that are generally alleged to prove that public confession was at times obligatory in the Church; and he actually finds but two texts of Origen that seem to have that meaning. Of the second I shall say nothing, for it may not refer to confession properly so called [2]. We have quoted the first in a preceding chapter. Origen exhorts the sinner to confess his faults to a spiritual physician; but he demands at the same time that the spiritual physician thus chosen should have

[1] *Das Beichtsiegel in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, p. 3 and foll., Freiburg im Br., 1912.

[2] This is the text of the viith homily on Leviticus, n. 10.

knowledge and be filled with mercy and sympathy : *Circumspice diligentius cui debeas confiteri peccatum tuum. Proba prius medicum cui debeas causam languoris exponere.* Once he has chosen the confidant of his soul, the penitent must follow faithfully his advice and in those cases when the physician thinks that his sickness is of such a nature that it had better be made known to the whole assembly of the faithful and attended to in their presence, the patient must not hesitate to follow that advice[1]. Here a twofold confession is evidently referred to : one that is made in secret to the spiritual physician, i. e., to the confessor chosen by the penitent, the other that is made in the assembly of the faithful on the confessor's advice. But, even supposing that this second confession is more than a general protestation of guilt—which is far from being certain—it is evident that coming as it does after the confession made to the confessor, this second confession is not the sacramental confession. It is a humiliation that the confessor imposes upon the penitent for faults that are perhaps known and have given scandal, and that is a part of his penance, just as though, for instance, a confessor now imposed upon a child to declare to his parents a fault that he has committed against them, and ask their pardon for it; but

[1] *In Psalm.* xxxvii, homil. ii, 6.

this is not confession properly so called. Long before this avowal is made, the confession itself has taken place; and it has been secret, inasmuch as the confessor alone has been the witness thereof.

I have said however that public confession is met with at times, but by way of unimportant exception. This is the case, for instance, with the Audians, spoken of by Theodoret[1], who imposed public confession absolutely on all the members of the sect : a ceremony, Theodoret adds, which often degenerated into a ludicrous peformance, for those so called penitents concealed their real sins and accused only trivial offenses that excited laughter. This is also the case with some public confessions performed in monasteries and more or less identical with the monastic " culpa ". St. John Climacus has left, in writing, the story of a highwayman who determined to embrace the religious life and upon whom the superior of the monastery imposed, as a trial and as a previous condition of his being accepted, that he should accuse all his sins before the assembled brethren. Thus it may have happened that some sinners under the mighty promptings of divine grace, or even some pious faithful, in their eagerness to humble themselves, accused their sins in public; but,

[1] *Haeretic. fabul. comp.*, IV, 10.

once more, this was neither an obligatory exercise, nor a regular institution. Wherever an attempt was made to establish that practice, the Church came forward and condemned it as an abuse.

The best known instance of that kind is found in St. Leo's CLXVIIIth letter, n. 2, which dates back to March 6, 459. The custom of reading publicly lists of sins heard in confession was being gradually introduced in several churches of Campania, Samnium, and Picenum. We may notice that this is not even a first public confession, but a more or less detailed manifestation of sins previously accused by penitents. St. Leo is told of that custom, and gives orders to discard it altogether. This, he writes, is an unlawful usurpation, an abominable practice contrary to the Apostolic rule, and which must certainly result in preventing sinners from doing penance. "It suffices for them to make known to the bishops, *through a secret confession,* the state of their conscience... *That confession suffices,* which is made first to God and then to the bishop, who will take a suppliant's part on behalf of the sins of the penitent." These words are clear; the Pope not only declares that public confession is not obligatory; but, moreover, by saying that it is against the Apostolic rule and can but discredit penance, he condemns it as a novelty that is detrimental to the welfare of souls.

This, then, is the first conclusion that we may draw : whether the penance is public or private, i. e., whether the satisfaction was to be performed publicly or privately, the previous confession was always secret. Now what was the *subject-matter* of these confessions? It has been said that, at least during the first three centuries, the faithful confessed only the sins called *ad mortem,* and considered exceptionally grave,—apostasy, fornication and murder. But this is an error that is unsound both theologically and historically. On this point Tertullian is explicit. As was said already [1], after becoming a Montanist, he looks upon some grave sins, particularly the three sins *ad mortem,* as irremissible; as to the others, he teaches expressly that the bishop can forgive them, provided they are previously confessed and atoned for. And what are those faults? He mentions some of them in the *De pudicitia* (Chap. XIX) : being angry unjustly, using manual violence, speaking evil wilfully; swearing rashly; forfeiting his plighted word; lying from bashfulness or necessity; the sins committed in business, official duties, trade, meals, by sight and hearing : all these are sins for which the bishop can grant absolution, and, therefore, which, if they have been committed, must be confessed. The subject-matter of con-

[1] Cf. above, p. 130.

fession, then, was more extensive than some critics would have us believe; on the whole, it was substantially the same as now and *de jure* included all the sins that we call now mortal.

As early as the fourth century, attempts were made to classify these sins, and group them in a logical order, for the use both of the penitent, to help him when examining his conscience, and of the confessor, to help him when asking questions of the penitent. The mention of seven or eight capital sins dates back at least to Evagrius Ponticus and was adopted by St. John Climacus and St. Gregory the Great, before finding their way into our theological text-books. During the early part of the middle ages, however, to those more or less scientific classifications confessors prefer, as a rule, lists that are both more simple and more complete. Samples thereof may be found in St. Cæsarius, and still better in Alcuin; those lists, which are very much like the models of examination of conscience given in our catechisms, had, no doubt, the same advantages and also the same drawbacks.

Confession, then, during the first centuries just as at the dawn of the 20th century, had for its subject-matter all the grievous sins that had been committed. Let me add, however, that generally and as a rule, it included mortal sins only; and it is precisely in this that the ancient custom differed from ours. Now, as we all

know, we must confess our mortal sins only; but we know too, that, as a matter of fact, pious Christians accuse also and often accuse only venial sins. Formerly, those venial sins were not accused. This does not mean at all that those sins were not taken seriously. No, indeed; ancient Church writers take notice of venial sins and often mention them. But when they do mention them, they tell us that, as we commit them daily, we must expiate them daily by means of prayer, alms-deeds, good works, and the acts of contrary virtues; they never tell us that it is profitable to accuse them. Even without other reasons, this alone might sufficiently explain why, till the sixth century, we never read that any one of the great saints and bishops who lived then, ever went to confession. St. Charles Borromeo and St. Francis of Sales were wont to confess every day. After their baptism, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine most probably never went to confession. The former two mentioned as well as the two latter simply followed the rules and spirit of their times. The former made with fervor what are called confessions of devotion. As to the latter, since during the fourth century annual confession was not obligatory, and since, moreover, they kept free from grievous sins, they may have died before having recourse, even once, to the sanctifying efficacy of the sacrament. Of course, penance

had a place in their lives; and we know, for instance, that St. Augustine did not fail in this regard, but it was an altogether private and unsacramental penance.

To whom did the faithful apply for confession during the first centuries?—The answer varies according to the time, the place, and other circumstances. First, it was received that in case of urgent need, any priest could hear the penitent's confession, and reconcile him. St. Cyprian, who, as we have seen, insisted so strongly upon the *lapsi* doing proper penance, decrees, however, that if any one of them is in danger of death, he must not wait for the bishop's return, but make his exomologesis to a priest and have the hands laid upon him, that he may go to God in peace[1]. As a matter of fact, many councils of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, proclaimed the right of ordinary priests, to reconcile penitents and even imposed upon them this duty in the bishop's absence and in case of necessity. But notice the words: "in the bishop's absence, and in case of necessity, " *absentia episcopi et necessitate cogente*[2]. For other cases, in the West, until the sixth and even the seventh century, the bishop alone heard the confession of penitents in all the small-sized towns. At that time

[1] *Epist.* XVIII, 1.
[2] Council of Hippo, in 393, can. 30.

far more than now, a bishop applied himself to the active duties of liturgical functions, preaching, and the immediate spiritual direction of the faithful. Moreover, when performed in public, penitential exercises were of no small concern to him who was the first shepherd of the community, and owing to the small size of that community and also to the infrequency of confession, he could easily acquit himself of that ministry. We have already said with what solicitude and discretion St. Ambrose gave himself to that work.

Notice the words : *in the West, in the small-sized towns.* For, at Rome, since the fourth century, and in the East, since the third century, there existed an institution that relieved the bishop of the burden of hearing the penitents' confession, and of watching over the performance of the penance : I refer to the institution of priests *paenitentiarii.* According to Socrates [1], it was established in the East in connection with the Novatian schism in the year 251 ; according to the *Liber Pontificalis* [2], it was originated in Rome by Pope Marcellus, who ruled from the year 304 to the year 309. Till his time, the city of Rome formed, as it were, but one parish that was administered in common by the Pope and his

[1] *Hist. eccl.*, v, 19.
[2] Edit. DUCHESNE, I, p. 164.

priests; we are told by the *Liber* that Pope Marcellus divided it into twenty-five *tituli*, or parishes, each of them being presided over by a clergy of its own, whose duty it was to exercise therein the sacred ministry and particularly, to administer the sacraments of Baptism and Penance. That institution helped the bishop by sharing in his burden and, at the same time, made the reception of the sacraments easier for the faithful. However, as I have said, it was not followed outside of Rome; and it is only some three centuries later in ordinary dioceses that we see ordinary priests receive the confession of sinners normally and except in case of necessity. In the year 589, the Council of Toledo still complains that some faithful are to be found, who repeat their penance as often as they fall and apply for reconciliation to a priest of the second order (*presbytero*). But during the seventh century the abuse or the custom which the Fathers of Toledo strive to do away with, succeeds in getting the upper hand. The practice of frequent confession spreads gradually and makes it impossible for the bishop to hear by himself all the confessions. On their coming to France and Italy, the monks of St. Columbanus bring, of course, their Irish customs and devote themselves to the ministry of confession. In the eighth century the development is consummated; and Venerable Bede makes no distinction between bishops and priests

from the viewpoint which we are now considering: to both Jesus has entrusted the function of hearing and absolving penitents[1].

II

Satisfaction. Solemn, less solemn, and private Penance.

Once the confession is over, it was the confessor's business to determine what satisfaction the sinner must offer to God and to the Church in order to obtain forgiveness. *De jure,* that satisfaction must be in proportion to the number and gravity of the sins that have been committed: *Quatenus satisfactio confessione disponitur,* Tertullian says with his usual energy; it is according to the confession that the satisfaction is measured. Here, however, *de facto,* we may mark out two very distinct periods. During the first which extends till the seventh century, there exist penitential canons that assign a definite penance to be imposed for certain faults that are mentioned therein. These canons originate from councils or from bishops, whose authority is received by all. Such are, in the East, the decisions of

[1] Cf. above. p. 134.

St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, St. Basil, and St. Gregory of Nyssa. Now the confessor must bear in mind those canons, when he comes to decide what penance the culprit must perform; but, except in a few special cases, he is not absolutely bound by them, and to him it is reserved ultimately to determine the measure in which he has to comply with them. St. Leo, whose mind is so practical and at the same time so firm, comes back to that point again and again. It is his will that the penance should be applied with moderation and, as it were, reluctantly; and that the confessor should take into account the age of the penitent, his health, his occupation, and also the intensity of his repentance[1]. The confessor must not fight sin in the abstract; he must strive to rescue and heal this or that individual sinner placed in such or such circumstances :—a warning which is exceedingly wise and humane.

However, after the seventh century and for more than two or three hundred years, in the midst of the disturbances brought about by incessant wars, and as a consequence of the intellectual falling off of the clergy, these very sensible recommendations were almost completely forgotten. That is the epoch generally called that of *tarified penance*. The custom origi-

[1] *Epist.* x, 8 ; CLIX, 6.

nated in Celtic and Anglo-Saxon churches. In order to make confessors' task easier, those churches had some pamphlets called *penitentials,* which had been composed by their most illustrious bishops and scholars, Cummeanus, Theodore of Canterbury, Bede, Ecgbert of York. These determined the exact amount of penance to impose for each category of sins, and their texts are still extant, though more or less doctored; they have been edited by Wasserschleben and Schmitz, and studied at length by Paul Fournier[1]. During the seventh century, those pamphlets were brought to the continent by the monks of St. Columbanus and spread almost everywhere in France, Germany and Italy, though with disastrous consequences. Equipped with a penitential, confessors were naturally inclined to apply its tariffs in a rather mechanical way, and were concerned mainly with reckoning the exact number of months and years of penance due by their penitents. Moreover, those penitentials did not agree together, so that such or such a fault might be dealt with leniently in some place and very severely in another place. The Church, of course, as well as the authors of these penitentials themselves, did not want such abuses; and even as early as the ninth century,

[1] In the *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature Religieuses*, vol. VI-IX, (1901-1904).

there set in against penitential booklets a reaction that suppressed their use gradually. They still remain a precious monument of the penitential discipline of the early middle ages and contain many interesting data as regards the turn of mind of men during that unsettled period.

But to come back to the penance itself. However it was determined, it could be performed in two ways : either *publicly,* and more or less in sight and with the knowledge of the whole Christian community, or *secretly* and *privately.* That distinction is very plainly seen after the seventh and even after the sixth century. But, before that time, it is far more obscure, and some scholars—even among conservatives —think that generally, till about the year 550, there existed but one way of accomplishing the sacramental penance—the public penance. However, they distinguished in that public penance two degrees : a higher degree, in which both the publicity and the severity of the penance reached their *maximum,* as it were, and which was imposed on those sinners who were guilty of exceptionally grave and scandalous crimes : this was the *plenary* or *solemn* penance ; then, a lower degree for the sinners who were guilty of secret or less grievous mortal sins. The satisfactory works connected with the latter degree were shorter and less severe, and although those who went through these exercises were

known to the community, yet they were free from the humiliations to which those sinners were subject who went through the exercises of the plenary penance. It is that *less solemn* or *semi-plenary* penance which, in the course of time, ceased gradually to be public and became the strictly *private* and *secret* penance of which we have already spoken.

Solemn penance is the more anciently recorded, and from its description as given in historical records, we may judge how rigorously the Church took in hand the interests of God who had been insulted and of the Christian community which had been disedified. Three kinds of sins especially—at least when they were exterior and known—made one amenable thereto : apostasy, adultery and murder. They were called *mortal* preeminently (*ad mortem*), and considered —from the viewpoint of malice—*the* perfect types of three kinds of sins against God, oneself and the neighbor. In order to expiate them, penitents had to submit to definite exercises, which, however, varied according to the time and place. We know, from St. Basil's writings, the four degrees or stages of penance they had to go through in the churches of Cappadocia. The culprit was placed first in the *weepers'* category. As he had no right to enter the church, he stayed at the outside door, asking for the prayers of the faithful who came to

attend the liturgical service. After that first trial, which might last three or four years, he passed into the *hearers'* category : he did enter the church, but he stayed as far as he could from the altar, in the inner vestibule, and could stay there only till after the exhortation of the bishop or of the priest that followed the reading of the Gospel, when he retired. The third category was that of the *kneelers* or *prostrators*. Once his second trial had been gone through, the hearer went up a little higher into the church, and joined the catechumens who occupied the space between the vestibule and the *ambo,* or the reader's chair. There he followed not only the readings and the preaching, but also the prayers that were said afterward over the catechumens and over him. But he was not allowed to stay for the oblation strictly so called, and as soon as this began, he had to leave together with the candidates for baptism. If he persevered in his penance, he passed into the category of the *consistentes*—, which means that, standing by the side of the ordinary faithful, he attended the whole liturgical service; however, he could neither present himself the matter of the sacrifice, nor hear his name mentioned in the *memento* of the living nor could he receive communion. These privileges were given back to him only at the end of his probation, when he was definitively reconciled.

Furthermore, it may be observed that that probation, which, of course, comprised also private fastings and bodily mortifications, often lasted several years. In his 56th canon [1], St. Basil imposes on murderers the following penance : " The intentional homicide, who has afterwards repented, will be excommunicated from communion for twenty years. The twenty years will be appointed for him as follows : for four he ought to weep, standing outside the door of the church, beseeching the faithful as they enter in, to offer prayer in his behalf, and confessing his own sin. After four years, he will be admitted among the hearers and during five years will go out with them. During seven years he will go out with the kneelers, praying. During four years he will only stand with the faithful, but he will not take part in the oblation. On the completion of this period he will be admitted to the sacraments. "

For many years it was thought that the form of solemn penance just described as used during the fourth century in the churches of Cappadocia, was the form generally followed in the whole Church. But a more careful study of the subject has proved that this is not at all the case, and that it was received not even in all the churches of the East. In the West, although the peniten-

[1] *Epist.* CCXVII (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. VIII, p. 256).

tial exercises were just as severe, if not more so, the process was more simple. The culprit who submitted himself to plenary penance, first went before the bishop before all the faithful assembled : during the fifth century, the day appointed for that ceremony was Ash-Wednesday, the first day of Lent. The bishop laid his hands on the culprit *in paenitentiam,* clad him with a hairshirt and sent him back for a while to the church-door. From that time on, the penitent shaved his head, put on mourning garments, covered himself with ashes, refrained from bathing and from dainties in eating and drinking, fasted often and prolonged his prayers and vigils. Moreover, in order to draw upon himself the compassion and suffrages of the brethren, he would, at the conclusion of the liturgical service, prostrate himself again before the bishop, and also before the priests, widows and virgins consecrated to God. The following is Tertullian's description of exomologesis, i. e. penance, at the beginning of the third century : " Exomologesis is then a discipline for man's prostration and humiliation, enjoining a demeanor calculated to move mercy. With regard to the very dress and food, it commands the penitent to lie in sackcloth and ashes, to cover his body in mourning, to lay his spirit low in sorrows, to correct by severe treatment the sins which he has committed; moreover to know no food and drink, but such as is plain...

Usually the penitent adds prayers to fastings, groans, weeps and makes outcries unto the Lord his God; he bows before the feet of the priests and kneels before those who are pleasing to God: he enjoins on all the brethren to intercede for him, that he may obtain forgiveness [1]."

These words of Tertullian find an echo in what St. Jerome writes towards the end of the fourth century concerning Fabiola's penance. Fabiola had divorced a profligate husband, and during his lifetime had remarried. The civil law allowed her to do so. But the Roman Church, then as now, knew of no compromise, on the subject of the indissolubility of marriage. After the death of her second husband, Fabiola did penance for her second wedding as for an adultery. "It was then that she put on sackcloth to make public confession of her error. It was then that in the presence of all Rome (in the basilica which formely belonged to that Lateranus who perished by the sword of Cæsar) she stood in the ranks of the penitents and exposed before bishop, priests and people—all of whom wept when they saw her weep—her dishevelled hair, pale features, soiled hands and unwashed neck... She laid bare her wound to the gaze of all, and Rome beheld with tears the disfiguring

[1] *De pœnitentia*, IX, 3, 4; cf. *De pudicitia*, XIII, 7 (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. III, p. 664).

scar which marred her beauty. She uncovered her limbs, bared her head, and closed her mouth. She no longer entered the church of God, but like Mary, the sister of Moses, she sat apart without the camp, till the priest who had cast her out should himself call her back... That face by which she had once pleased her second husband, she now smote with blows; she hated jewels, shunned ornaments and could not bear to look upon fine linen. In fact she bewailed the sin she had committed as bitterly as if it had been adultery [1]. "

These texts, to which many others might be added, enable us to understand to some extent the expiation that was implied by solemn penance in the ancient Church of the West. At times, that expiation might last as long as one lived; this was the case for instance with the *lapsi* who sacrificed to idols in the time of St. Cyprian; and with the apostates and the unchaste monks in the time of Pope Siricius, in the year 385 [2]. However, the expiation was often only temporary. Reconciliation was granted in danger of death : but, in case of recovery, the penitent must resume and take up his penance until it is fully completed [3]. These were indeed very severe requirements. What made

[1] *Epist.* LXXVII (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. VI, p. 159-160).
[2] *Epist. ad Himerium*, 7.
[3] Lateran Council in 487, can. 5 ; Council of Epaona in 517, can. 30.

them still more severe, were the consequences that followed from plenary penance. Besides the fact that whoever had been submitted to it but once, could never enter the clergy, he could not even after being reconciled, carry any arms and serve in the army or engage in a trade of any importance or marry and, if he had already married, live in the state of matrimony. In case he transgressed these prohibitions, he was considered a relapser, and consequently, he could not receive communion unless when about to die. For solemn penance was granted but once to the same person, and, in case of relapse, the penitent could not resume its exercises, nor have again recourse to its remedial efficacy.

To understand such severity—which seems to us very strange—we must recall both the high ideal of Christian life which the Church strove to promote and preserve in all her members, her repeated teachings on the obligation of standing by one's baptismal promises, and also the fact that, especially during the first centuries, baptism was received, as a rule, only at a period of life when passions had subsided and by men who were fully conscious of the obligations they assumed. The very grievous faults that have been mentioned and had to be expiated by solemn penance, were then of comparatively rare occurrence.

Furthermore, as early as the sixth century, the

discipline just described was modified in the direction of leniency. Inasmuch as their mode of life was to be so much like the monastic mode of life, many penitents, especially when their penance was to last a long while, preferred to enter the cloister and put on the monastic habit, instead of remaining in the world. The Church approved that conduct and even made it obligatory for the ministers in sacred orders who had committed some scandalous faults and had not been deposed. *De jure* that stay in the cloister might not be definitive and might last only the time appointed for the penitential exercises. But, as a matter of fact, many penitents found therein a rest for their souls and stayed there till the end of their lives. This, I say, was a lenient application of the discipline; for, although in his new state of life, the penitent had to practise monastic austerities, yet he had not to undergo the humiliations he would have had to suffer, had he remained in the world: and, besides, he found real comfort in the society of his brethren. This is the view that found expression during the seventh century in the Gelasian sacramentary, and was set forth during the eighth by the archbishop of Aquileia, Paulinus, in his letter to Heistulfus. On the charge of adultery brought against his wife by one witness only who besides might have been a slanderer, Heistulfus had killed her. His deed was a public and

scandalous homicide. Paulinus sends him a letter[1] and tells him that he must submit to plenary penance, though he is free either to perform it at home, according to the severity of the canons, of which he reminds him, or to enter a monastery. But he does not fail to state that the first form of expiation will be far more severe, and he suggests that for his own sake Heistulfus should adopt rather the second.

These, then, are the main outlines of the requirements and conditions of *solemn* or *plenary* public penance. Moreover, as has been said already, there was also a more accessible form of penance for lesser, though still grievous, faults, those faults which Tertullian declares it is rather difficult for ordinary Christians to avoid altogether. This latter penance may be called also public, although it had neither the solemn character nor the consequences of plenary penance. In a text that has been referred to several times in these pages, Origen observes that it was left in some measure to the confessor to judge as to whether or not the penitent ought to be submitted to solemn penance; there existed, then, a private penance, or at least a penance that had only a limited publicity. Likewise, St. Augustine distinguishes two different procedures according as the sins are very grave

[1] *Epist. ad Heistulfum*, *Patr. lat.*, XCIX, 181-186.

and scandalous (*ita gravia*), or secret and not so grievous. In the latter case the cure is effected "by some medicinal punishments", *quibusdam correptionum medicamentis*[1], consequently outside the plenary penance. Many other authorities might be quoted to the same purport. We need not insist, since the fact is granted by all scholars.

What is far less certain, is the precise form of that less solemn penance. In the West, as has been said, and outside of the Celtic and British churches, it seems to have been at the beginning quasi-public. The penitents *ex levioribus commissis* were present at the liturgical service together with the other faithful; but at the end of the Mass, like those penitents who were the most guilty, they prostrated themselves before the bishop who laid hands upon them, and by their attitude itself they asserted their sinfulness. Likewise, during the fifth century, they received on Maunday-Thursday the forgiveness of their faults, together with the other penitents[2]. But that publicity was the only feature that semi-plenary penance had in common with solemn penance. The consequences of the latter—such as the humiliations with a hair-cloth, the change of dress, and the way of living, prolonged bodily

[1] *De fide et operibus*, 48; *Sermo* LXXXII, 1.
[2] ST. INNOCENT, *Epist.* XXV, 10.

mortifications—all these things were not gone through by those who performed the former kind of penance,—the semi-solemn penance. Nay, it soon happened, at the latest during the seventh century, that this publicity ceased altogether. We have already related in a former page, the paramount influence that the arrival of the Irish monks of St. Columbanus in France and Italy, at Luxeuil and at Bobbio, exercised over the penitential discipline in the West. They not only brought to those lands their penitentials; they introduced too the more frequent use of the strictly private and secret penance,—the only form of penance that was known to the churches on the other side of the Channel, and which indeed had been practised by them for many years. That lack of publicity harmonized so well with the tendency of the times and the demands of circumstances, that it became easily a received institution. Hence as regards heinous crimes, the severity and the solemn character of plenary penance continued to be observed : scandalous sinners had to choose between entering a monastery, or performing the penitential exercises according to the rigor of the canons. But the case of ordinary sinners was settled between themselves and their confessor. Like their confession, their penance remained secret, and whilst the expiatory works imposed upon them were far more severe than

those now imposed upon us, yet like ours, theirs had God only for their witness.

III

Absolution. Its solemnity and form.

Now we may come to the last element of the administration of penance : ***absolution.***

The law generally observed during the early centuries was that the effective accomplishment of the penance imposed by the confessor, must precede the culprit's reconciliation. As a general rule, no one was absolved till he had made satisfaction to God and to the Church. That rule suffered no exception, except for the sick who were in danger of death ; and so strong, in fact, was the sentiment that required of the penitent not merely the promise but the actual performance of satisfaction, that there was found in Provence, at the beginning of the sixth century, a certain bishop, Faustus of Riez, who asserted that when postponed to the very last moment, penance had no value whatever, and far from being a homage, was rather an insult offered to the divine majesty [1]. That view which shocked the feelings of the faithful, was implicitly con-

[1] Faustus, *Epist.* v ; *Sermo* ccLv, *P. L.*, xxxix, 2216.

demned by the Church. However, on this point, as on many others, the discipline had to yield to the rise of new circumstances. During the seventh and eighth centuries, in the midst of the uncertainty and the many dangers that resulted from wars and quarrels between princes, it became impossible to oblige many penitents, once their penance was accomplished, to come and present themselves again, after quite a long while, to the same confessor in order to receive his absolution. On the other hand, the penitential books of the other side of the Channel supply an indication, as we learn, for instance from that of St. Columbanus, that, in England and in Ireland, it was customary to absolve a penitent immediately after his confession. That practice was finally adopted elsewhere, and during the seventh century, St. Boniface of Mayence did not hesitate to give it his approval[1], thus sanctioning the custom which has since prevailed.

When the absolution was thus given immediately after confession, of course it was accompanied by no external and public ceremony. A strictly private absolution followed a strictly private penance, and could be given by an ordinary priest. This was not the case when penance was public and, as we have seen, it remained so till the sixth century. In his XXVth letter, n. 10,

[1] *Statuta*, XXXI.

which dates back to the year 416. Pope Innocent I affirms that at Rome all penitents, except those in danger of death, were publicly reconciled on Maunday Thursday. The order of the ceremony is given in the Gelasian sacramentary, which, although not composed till the seventh century, contains the description of customs that are certainly more ancient. According to Mgr Duchesne[1], the substance thereof is as follows: On Maunday Thursday, soon after the papal Mass has begun, a deacon brings into the church the penitents who have completed the time of their expiation and who are now prostrated full length in the center of the church. Addressing the pontiff in a magnificent oration, the deacon solicits for them forgiveness. The days of mercy and propitiation are at hand: soon the Church is to receive an increase from the number of the neophytes, who, on Holy Saturday, will become, through baptism, her children; let her receive also an increase from the number of the prodigal sons who return to the Father's house. The former will be cleansed by water; the latter have been cleansed by tears of repentance. They have groaned and prayed and subjected their flesh to bodily mortifications, so as to recover the health of their souls. May the pontiff listen

[1] *Origines du culte chretien*, p. 424 and f. English transl., p. 439 and f.).

to the entreaties of the Church in their behalf, and through the grace of reconciliation, may he restore in the land of the living, and in God's friendship, those who had been removed therefrom through the malice of Satan.

The Pope then admonishes the penitents either in person or through a priest; and afterward recites a prayer followed by another in the form of a preface: "O God, vivify this Thy servant whom Thou dost not will to die to thy grace. Thou who didst not abandon him in his wanderings, receive him now that he amends. Let Thy pity be moved by his groans and tears. Heal his wounds, proffer him in his fall a helping hand, so that Thy Church may suffer no decrease in a part of her body, and Thy flock no loss; and that the enemy may not rejoice over the evil that has befallen Thy family, and that he may not be overtaken by the second death, who is reborn in the bath of salvation[1].

This, then, was the rite followed in Rome during the fifth and sixth centuries for the recon-

[1] "(Vere dignum... æterne) Deus, humani generis benignissime conditor et misericordissime reformator; qui hominem invidia diaboli ab aeterniate dejectum unici Filii tui sanguine redemisti, vivifica hunc famulum tuum quem tibi nullatenus mori desideras, et qui non derelinquis devium, adsume correptum. Moveant pietatem tuam, quæsumus Domine, hujus famuli tui lacrymosa suspiria. Tu ejus medere vulneribus, tu jacenti manum porrige salutarem, ne Ecclesia tua aliqua sui corporis portione vastetur, ne grex tuus detrimentum sustineat, ne de familiæ tuæ damno inimicus exultet, ne renatum lavacro salutari mors secunda possideat."

ciliation of penitents. In the countries where the Gallican rite was followed, i. e., in France, Spain and at Milan, the ceremony took place probably on Good Friday; but we know very little of its particular details. The Mozarabic missal alone records at length a ceremony of Indulgence which took place in Spain and was evidently an echo of the ancient practice. The penitents prostrated themselves upon the ground and, in their name, the archdeacon reminded all present of the good shepherd " who gives his life for his sheep ", and prayed for forgiveness, *indulgentia*. The assembly of the faithful joined immediately with him and the word *Indulgentia* was repeated by all the people, as the refrain of a sort of litany that was recited by the bishop : " O Lord, we pray Thee : Indulgence ! From the Most High may descend Indulgence ! To our help, wretched that we are, may come Indulgence ! May it efface all our sins, Indulgence ! May it be granted to penitents, Indulgence ! " etc. [1]. The litany was followed by a prayer that was said by the bishop alone and that called down upon the penitents God's clemency. These prayers, litanies, and cries for Indulgence, were repeated three successive times. Then the penitents arose reconciled, and the liturgical service continued with the adoration of the cross.

[1] Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 449-451 (English transl., p. 443, f.).

The reader may have noticed that in that rite of public reconciliation, absolution is given to penitents in the form of a prayer addressed to God, in which the bishop entreats Him to forgive them. This is what has been called the *deprecatory* from of absolution. That form was used not only in public absolution, but also in the private absolution that was given by the priest after the eighth century, and it continued to be used till about the 13th century. As an instance, the following prayer, which is given by an ancient MS, may be a form of absolution : " O Almighty Majesty, we pray Thee mercifully to grant forgiveness to Thy servant N..., who has applied himself for a long while to the labors of a very austere penance, in order that, having recovered the wedding garment he had forfeited, he may deserve to be admitted to the royal banquet, from which he had been driven. Through Our Lord, Jesus Christ[1]. " Now, during the 13th century, scholastics thought that that way of absolving penitents did not sufficiently emphasize the judiciary power of the absolving priest, and the *indicative* form was substituted for the deprecatory forms. Instead of saying : May God absolve you, or, O my God, forgive his or her sins, the confessor said : By the authority given

[1] Cf. D. CHARDON, *Histoire des sacrements*, in MIGNE, *Theol. Curs. compl.*, vol. XX, 732.

me by Jesus Christ, I absolve you. It is evident, however, that in both cases the main idea is the same. The priest absolves, but he absolves only as God's organ and instrument : God absolves, but He absolves by the priest, His minister, who asks Him to do so. Hence it matters but little whether the remission of sins seems to be attributed to God rather than to the priest, or to the priest rather than to God, provided neither is excluded, since, as a matter of fact, both absolve. The Greek Church has kept the deprecatory form of absolution, and Pope Eugenius IV did not hesitate to declare that it was wholly sufficient.

IV

Frequency of the reception of penance.

In order to complete what has been said of the way in which Penance was received during the first centuries, I may add a few words on the frequency of confession at that time.

As regards plenary penance, the rule—as has been already observed—was absolute : that penance could be accomplished but once in one's lifetime. Testimonies to that effect are so many and so well known that it may suffice to recall

one or two : " Once the penance has been accomplished ", Pope Siricius writes [1], " culprits have no means left to begin it again ". Says St. Ambrose : " As there is but one baptism, so there is but one course of penance, I mean that which is performed in public [2]. " The motive of that law has just been stated by St. Ambrose : penance is looked upon as a second baptism. The first baptism—with water—had made the neophyte a child of God, a member of Jesus Christ. Henceforth the neophyte was strictly bound on account of these titles to lead a life perfectly pure, and free from all grievous sins : " Whosoever is born of God ", says St. John (*Epist.* I, III, 9), " committeth no sin : for His seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God ". This was the ideal which was always inculcated. Here below, unfortunately, ideals are but imperfectly obtained. Even after baptism, grave faults took place occasionally. Some faithful gave way during persecutions and, when face to face with torments, denied the faith ; others fell again into sensuality, or let themselves be carried away by their passions. Should they be forsaken and left to their own fate ? No. Since the baptism of water could not be repeated, there was another baptism to

[1] *Epist. ad Himerium*, 6.

[2] *De paenitentia*, II, 10 (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2d series vol. X, p. 357).

which the culprit could still have recourse :—the laborious baptism, the baptism of tears, penance. That concept of penance looked upon as a second baptism was made tangible, as it were, by the various stations which must be gone over successively by penitents, and corresponded to those which had to be gone over by catechumens. But logical consistency was carried also to the very limit, and since the baptism of water could not be renewed, plenary and solemn penance was likewise considered unrenewable. In case of relapse into the same faults that had made penance once necessary, there remained for the culprit but to weep over those faults, till he was about to die; then, and not till then, was he granted communion.

Such a severe discipline did not always produce happy results. From some words of Tertullian we can surmise that many who ought to have done penance, abstained from performing it[1]; and especially, in order not to expose themselves to a relapse, some postponed penance till their last sickness. According to the usual expression, the penitent *received* penance then : he was placed by the imposition of hands in a penitent's state. On the other hand, as he was in danger of death, he was reconciled immediately and it was in the other world that he atoned for his sins. Little by little, that way of acting was

[1] *De paenitentia*, x, 1.

deemed so easy and profitable that it was adopted by the faithful as an ordinary practice; and so, excellent Christians, who, *de jure*, were not indeed bound by the obligation of plenary penance, in fact asked for it at times in their last sickness, so as to die penitents. According to his biographers [1], St. Cæsarius of Arles was very anxious that no one should die before receiving the remedy of penance. However at times that practice gave rise to rather embarrassing situations. An instance of this kind is preserved in a decision of the Council of Toledo in the year 683. Realizing his grave condition, Gaudentius, bishop of Valeria, had submitted himself to penance. But contrarily to his expectations, he came back to health. Now there was a very formal law to the effect that a cleric in major orders who had done penance could no longer exercise the functions of his order. According to law, then, Gaudentius had but one thing to do, viz., to resign his bishopric. With the view to have his perplexity settled and obtain a final decision, he applied to that Council. The latter declared that, since the good Bishop had accused no grievous sin, and his penance was merely devotional, he could continue to exercise his functions. But Gaudentius was very near indeed paying too great a price for his piety [2].

[1] *S. Caesarii vita*, II, 9, *P. L.*, LXVII, 1029.
[2] MANSI, *Coll. concil.*, XI, 1071.

We need not, then, ask ourselves whether during the first centuries the faithful received often the plenary penance, for, as we have just said, it could be received only once, and certainly many never received it. But this is not the case with the penance that I have called semi-plenary, or semi-public. In truth, our information on this particular point during the first three centuries is very meager indeed. But we have more light regarding the fourth, and still more regarding the fifth century. Thus, for instance, St. Athanasius exhorts the faithful to prepare themselves for their Easter communion by penance and confession[1]. St. John Chrysostom is charged by the Oak Council—probably as the result of some misunderstanding—with allowing the relapsed penitents to have recourse to him as often as they fell into their faults[2]. St. Leo urges again and again careless, though not scandalous sinners, to prepare themselves by penance for the Easter solemnities[3]. Victor, bishop of Cartenna, rebukes precisely those relapsed sinners who are discouraged, and reminds them that there is for them another remedy besides that of which they have already made use—confession, penance[4]. Again, in the

[1] *Epist. exhortativae*, XIX, 8.
[2] MANSI, III, 1145; SOCRATES, *Hist. eccles.*, VI, 21.
[3] *Sermo* XLIII, 2, 3.
[4] *De paenitentia*, 12, cf. 24.

year 589, the Fathers of the Council of Toledo go so far as to complain that really some abuse confession, and they condemn those Christians "who go and ask reconciliation from the priest, as often as they have a mind to sin[1]". There is no doubt, then, that the semi-plenary penance could be repeated, and that in fact, about the sixth century, it was accomplished very nearly every year, at least by good Christians. Furthermore, there happened in this case what happened as we have seen with plenary penance. As has been said, those who needed penance were constituted penitents on Ash Wednesday by the laying on of the bishop's hands and the imposition of ashes on the head. It occurred to some devout Christians to join them through a sentiment of humility and make themselves penitents for the whole Lenten season, so as to be absolved also on Maunday Thursday from their slight faults. This was the origin of the general ceremony of Ashes. Gradually, as a matter of fact, not only penitents, nor even devout Christians only, but the whole Christian community placed itself in the state of penance at the beginning of Lent and received the ashes. Likewise, it was the whole community which bowed itself at the end of Mass, while the priest was saying a special prayer over the penitents.

[1] Mansi, ix, 995.

We still recite that prayer on the feriæ of Lent and, as in olden times, we precede it with the invitation : " *Humiliate capita vestra Deo* ", " Humble your heads before God ".

As to the strictly private penance which succeeded the semi-plenary penance, we need not observe that it could be repeated many and many a time, and that the faithful could always have recourse thereto. It is precisely in connection with it that the Church enacted her first regulations regarding the frequent reception of the sacrament of Penance ; for, till then, the fact of one's confessing before the Easter communion seems to have been a custom rather than the fulfilment of an express ecclesiastical law. Probably the first regulation of that kind is found in the prescriptions which St. Chrodegand, bishop of Metz from the year 742 to the year 764, enacted for his clergy and which has been already mentioned [1]. All clerics must confess at least twice a year : once at the beginning of Lent, and a second time between August 15 and November 1 [2]. That rule of St. Chrodegand was modified later on. In its revised text, it requires of the laity three confessions a year, and adds that those who go more often will do well [3]. Monks must confess every Saturday

[1] Cf. p. 104.
[2] *P. L.*, LXXXIX, 1104.
[3] *Ibid.*, col. 1071-1073.

This first step was naturally followed by others in the same direction : everywhere from that time on, we witness the enactment of similar prescriptions. Let me briefly refer those who wish to follow that evolution up to the Lateran Council which, in the year 1215, established the present discipline, to the excellent work of Fr. A. Villien on the *History of the Commandments of the Church* [1]. However the reader must have noticed that monks had to go to confession quite often, once every week, on Saturday, and must have inferred, and rightly so, that it is from that monastic custom, that there originated frequent confession, the confession of devotion, the confession of venial sins, which is practised by devout Christians with so much profit for their souls. For it is very likely that monks had not grievous sins to confess every week. Generally their faults must have been violations of the rule, or venial sins, which, as such, were not necessary matter of confession. They accused them, nevertheless, and thus they were introducing in the Church a custom that was new to some extent, though in perfect harmony with her teaching and spirit.

This rather lengthy exposition may be summed up in these five propositions :

[1] *Histoire des commandements de l'Eglise* (English transl. St. Louis, 1915).

1.—In Christian antiquity, i. e., during the first eight centuries, the sacrament of Penance comprised, as it does to-day, three main parts : *confession, satisfaction* and *absolution*.

2.—Confession was always *de jure* secret. We may observe that, in this particular regard, exceptions confirm the rule.

3.—As regards heinous and scandalous crimes, satisfaction was *solemn and plenary;* as to ordinary mortal sins, it was first *semi-public and semi-plenary* until the 7th-8th century ; then it became strictly *private.*

4.—Absolution was *public* till the 7th-8th century; subsequently, it remained *public* for heinous and scandalous crimes: as to the others, it ceased altogether to be public and became *private.*

5.—Lastly, during the first seven or eight centuries, except perhaps in monasteries, the sacrament of Penance was received seldom, probably not more often than once a year. The earliest regulations that determined the frequency of its reception date back to the 8th century.

No doubt, one might point out many differences between the practices that we have been studying and our present customs; but it is evident that none of those differences is concerned with the substance of our belief. In her past the Church has nothing to condemn, nothing to disown. Whether in dealing with sinners she uses greater severity or greater leniency; whether

she seems to make her disciplinary regulations stricter or more gentle, and whether, according to the demands of time and circumstances, she shows herself more indulgent or more stern, she remains always faithful to her spirit and to her mission, which is mainly to save souls. For Christianity is a religion of justice, the religion of the expiation of sin : it is the religion of the cross, and hence, it is but just that a Christian, when guilty, should share in His expiation, who hangs on the cross for our sins. But our religion is also a religion of forgiveness, the religion of the infinite mercy ; and however indulgent the Church may be towards her prodigal children, her indulgence shall never surpass His mercy, who when dying for sinners, thirsted for their love and stretched out His arms unto them.

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